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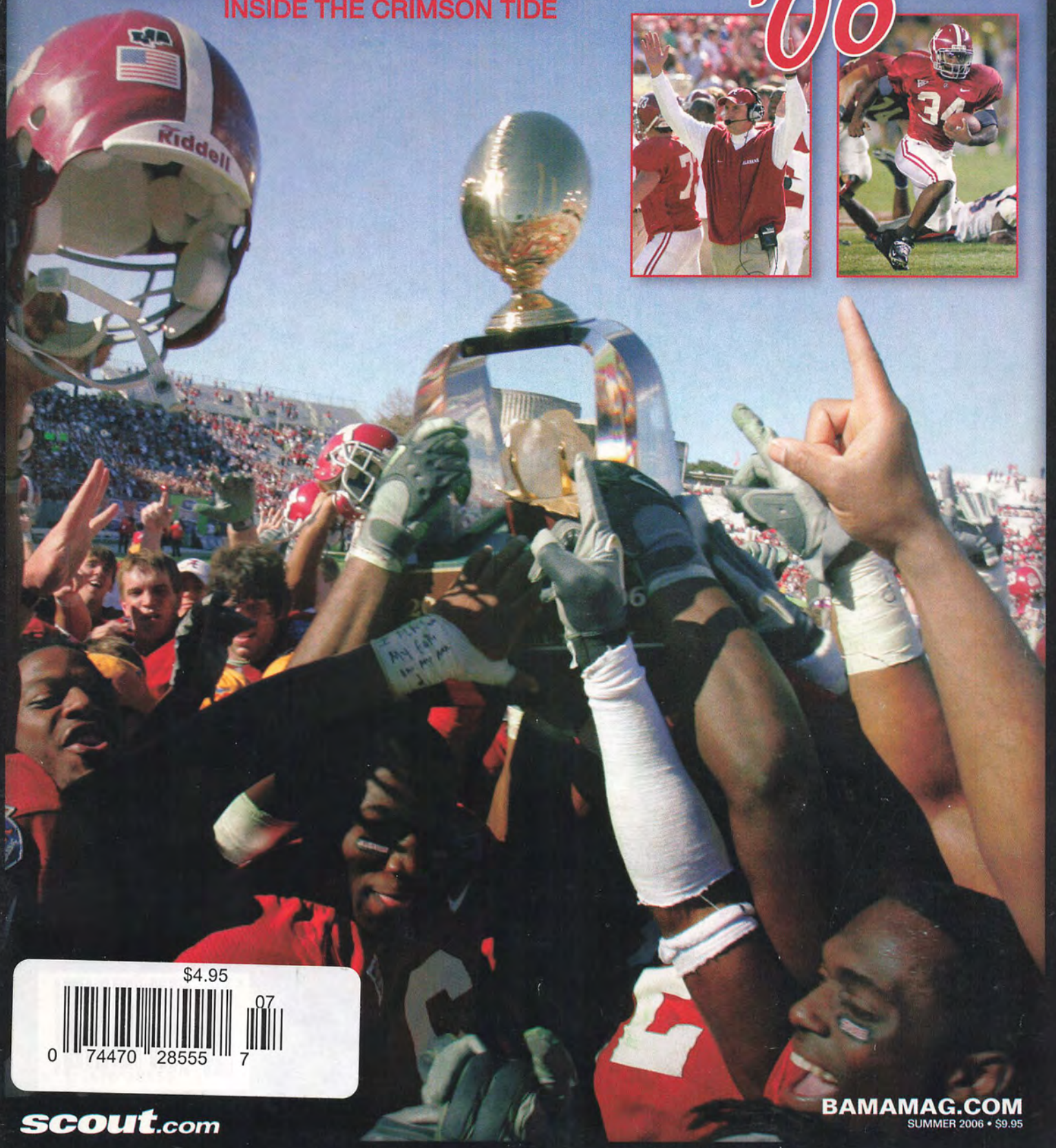
INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

FOOTBALL YEARBOOK '06



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Letter from the Editor

Dear Fellow Crimson Tide Fans,

It may not seem likely, but Gene Bartow, the former athletics director at Alabama-Birmingham, and I have a mutual friend. There were things about Bartow that I did not like when he was trying to make the Birmingham school–which I grew up knowing as the "Extension Center" of The University of Alabama–into a competitor of The University. And because he had a whiney demeanor, he was a fairly easy target for my barbs.

Once my name came up to Bartow in the presence of our mutual friend.

"He hates me," Bartow was reported to have whined.

My friend interceded. "It's his job!" the friend explained.

I don't know (or care) if Bartow was placated.

That was not entirely correct, either. It is not "my job" to hate all things UAB. In fact, I am fond of Watson Brown, the head football coach and, until recently, athletics director. And I count new Head Basketball Coach Mike Davis among my longtime friends.

So what is my job? My friends say I get paid to go to Alabama football games. It's really quite a bit more than that. For one thing, I don't go to a game the same way as most of the 92,000-plus who will be in Bryant-Denny Stadium on September 2. And I don't leave whenever I want to, say, "beat the crowd." As I have for just about every football Saturday since the late 1960s, I go to football games to work. And I go to football practices. And I read the work of other football writers. (I profess that I pay no attention to radio or television commentators, who I have found have little or no football acumen.)

And, of course, I write. I write about basketball and sometimes about baseball or some other sport. But mostly I write Alabama football. And I enjoy it.

This summer Scout.com hosted one of its many combines in Tuscaloosa. Over 250 high school football players were on the Alabama practice fields on a late April morning. As I watched the players going through the various tests and then through drills under the Scout instructors, I was taken with how much the young men were enjoying what they were doing. Even though it was strenuous and probably stressful for most (who were trying to impress visiting coaches who will be offering scholarships), the players all were in good spirits as they competed against their peers.

Football players enjoy the game. They would have to, because football practice (unlike practice in most sports) is not fun. Football fans enjoy the game. For years I have been amused as university professors and psychologists have explained the love of football as a substitute for something as ridiculous as a way to make up for losing the Civil War. Football is fun to watch, 11 men on each side with specific responsibilities, the winners of one-on-one battles determining success or failure on each play.

I enjoy watching football and I am appreciative of the opportunity to write about football, specifically about the men who coach it and play it.

Football is never far away for those of us who follow the Alabama Crimson Tide. The success of Bama for many, many decades makes it a daily topic, year-round. Even now in the heat of an Alabama summer it's easy to think about Alabama football.

We hope this 2006 'BAMA Football Yearbook adds to your Crimson Tide pleasure. ■

Sincerely,

Kirk McNair

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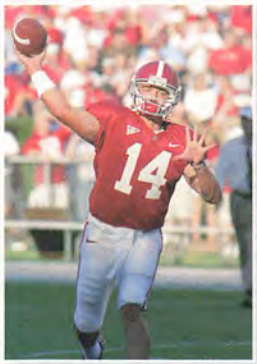

'BAMA
INSIDE THE CRIMSON TIDE

Summer 2006 • Volume 28, Issue Six

Features

7 2006 Alabama Football
Many factors go into a successful season

12 The Offense
With inexperienced quarterback, this could be year of tailback
Plus depth chart and a look at quarterback John Parker Wilson

21 The Defense
Tide has to fill gaps to live up to recent reputation
Plus depth chart and a look at linebacker Terrence Jones

29 Special Teams
Christensen back, but other kicking teams spots to be replaced
Plus depth chart and a look at punter P.J. Fitzgerald

33 The 2006 Crimson Tide
Profiles of returning Alabama football players

43 2006 Alabama Signees
Profiles of Crimson Tide football newcomers

54 Alabama Opponents
Scouting reports on Alabama's 12 regular season opponents

66 Recruiting
A look at what Bama wants and who the prospects may be

87 Head Coach Mike Shula
A look at Alabama's fourth-year head football coach

90 The Assistants
Alabama's assistant coaches critical to success

Departments

4 Letter From Editor
7 2006 Alabama Football Schedule
47 Depth Chart By Class
48 2005 Alabama Football Statistics
50 2006 Alabama Football Roster
52 Alabama Quick Facts
53 2006 SEC Composite Schedule
74 Top 25 Alabama Prep Prospects
75 Recruiting Hot List
76 Championship Tradition
79 Bryant-Denny Stadium
80 By The Numbers
86 Future Schedules

Cover Photo by Kent Gidley. Alabama's 10-2 season was punctuated by taking home the Cotton Bowl Trophy. Head Coach Mike Shula will depend on halfback Kenneth Darby (34) to lead the Tide in 2006.

By Kirk McNair

Replacing stars, tough schedule in Mike Shula's fourth season

An Overview

2006 Alabama Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site	Series Record
September 2	Hawaii	Tuscaloosa	Tied, 1-1
September 9	Vanderbilt	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 56-19-4
September 16	Louisiana-Monroe	Tuscaloosa	First meeting
September 23	Arkansas	Fayetteville	UofA leads 10-6-0
September 30	Florida	Gainesville	UofA leads 20-12-0
October 7	Duke	Tuscaloosa	Tied, 1-1
October 14	Mississippi	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 42-9-2
October 21	Tennessee	Knoxville	UofA leads 44-37-7
October 28	Florida-International	Tuscaloosa	First meeting
November 4	Mississippi State	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 72-15-3
November 11	LSU	Baton Rouge	UofA leads 43-21-5
November 18	Auburn	Tuscaloosa	UofA leads 38-31-1
December 2	SEC Championship	Atlanta (CBS)	UofA 2 wins, 3 losses

Photo: University of Alabama

With apologies to Grantland Rice, the general measure in sports is less how the game is played than whether it is a win or a loss. Alabama Football Coach Mike Shula's third season was a success in that it was a 10-2 season, a year in which the Crimson Tide was Cotton Bowl champion. And it followed less-than-satisfactory seasons, a 4-9 mark in Shula's first year in 2003 (which no one would blame on Shula owing to the chaotic situation Shula inherited) and a 6-6 record in 2004.

A number of factors go into football success. Some are within the control of the head coach and his assistants. They include recruiting, game plan preparation, practice efficiency, and gameday decisions as to personnel and schemes. Some are outside that control, most notably the strength of the opponent (schedule luck) and injury luck. For Alabama and Shula, the lingering affects of unprecedented NCAA penalties have been a major factor.

Prior to last season it was pointed out that most Alabama coaches have had good success in their third seasons. That was particularly notable for Gene Stallings in 1992 when Bama went 13-0 and won its last national championship. But Stallings was hardly rebuilding. He took over a team that had been successful. The barometer of Alabama coaches, Paul Bryant, had a good third season (8-1-2) when he had to take over a program in disarray. And then in his fourth year he went 11-0 and won the national championship.

There's an adage that the best way to predict the weather for tomorrow is to say that it will be like it is today. And to some extent a football team that has a good season will follow that with another good season. But there are exceptions. Alabama went 10-3 and won the Southeastern Conference championship in 1999, then went 3-8 in 2000 and Mike DuBose lost his job. Fortunately, the Shula regime bears zero resemblance to the DuBose crowd.

There is a reason that Alabama is one of the nation's most prominent football programs. The long tradition of success leads to more success in part because of resources generated by championship play. Players know that at Alabama they are going to play before sellout crowds and be seen on television. Although facilities may have temporarily lagged behind in recent years, for the most part Alabama has had excellent facilities and always has had top-of-the-line equipment. (Now, of course, the facilities are among the nation's best.)

Everyone involved in Alabama football recognizes that the bar at Bama has been set very high by the successes of past coaches and players. No one involved in Alabama football would want it any other way. And far from discouraging current coaches and players, the high standards of the past provide incentive.

Generally speaking, all those wins and championships by past Crimson Tide teams count for nothing when the ball is kicked off on fall Saturdays. Actually, over the years it has seemed that some opponents are intimidated by Bama, beaten before the opening coin toss. On the other hand, a win over Alabama–even a weak Crimson Tide team–is a watershed mark for many opponents. More often than not, Alabama gets the best the opponent has to offer.

It's not too hard to pinpoint the differences in Alabama's 2004 and 2005 seasons. In 2004 the Tide lost star quarterback Brodie Croyle, halfback Ray Hudson, and fullback Tim Castille to early-season injuries. Last year the Tide went most of the year unscathed by critical injury, although late in the year the loss of starting center JB Closner proved very costly–probably more costly even than the loss of star wide receiver Tyrone Prothro.

Injury luck has always been a key element in football success. Football is a contact sport and there are going to be injuries. But injury to the only experienced quarterback would be more serious than injury to a back-up flanker in most cases.

Its protests notwithstanding, the NCAA recently has not been about student-athletes. And when Alabama lost 21 initial scholarships, those Crimson Tide players remaining were put more at risk because of the lack of depth. A tired player is far more likely to be injured than a fresh player, and Bama had a severe lack of depth over the past few years.

A couple of solid recruiting classes have restored depth, although Alabama is quite a young team. Nearly 75 per cent of the Crimson Tide scholarships are held by sophomores and freshmen (including redshirt freshmen).

Many of the available jobs will go to underclassmen as the Crimson Tide has a bit of a rebuilding job to do this year, particularly on defense where seven starters have graduated. On offense the numbers aren't bad, but the Tide will be inexperienced at the most important position on the football field, at quarterback. And Bama didn't solve its punting problems in spring practice.

Historically, a team will have a number of players who make great progress in the time between spring practice and the start of fall practice in August. (Over the years there have been frustrating examples of players who report back in August behind where they were at the end of spring practice, but those instances are less frequent.)

Many of the very good Alabama teams of the Bryant era worked little in the weight room and players basically took the summer off, using that time to get summer jobs. Today, football (and other sports) is a year-round proposition. A football team reports for pre-season camp in August, goes through the season, then goes into an off-season program of strength and conditioning, followed by spring practice, another stretch of strength and conditioning, then a summer program that includes more strength and conditioning and voluntary workouts. The modern player spends very little time away from campus and the weightroom and practice fields.

Historically, the quarterback is the leader of the summer workout program, pass skeleton drills in which backs and wide receivers work against linebackers and defensive backs. (Linemen work separately on different drills, as do kickers.) Last year Bama's summer leader was the much-respected Croyle. This summer that task fell to sophomore quarterback John Parker Wilson.

One benefit of having all the players in summer school is that it is an opportunity to get ahead or get caught up on schoolwork.

Summer is a time in which pre-season predictions are made. Which team will be most successful owing to its returning players and its ability to replace losses? There is more to

it than that.

One of the most important components in the final record is the quality of the opposition. And even though a football field is the same size whether in Tuscaloosa or in some other city or town, homefield advantage counts, too.

Last year Alabama had most of its tough games in the friendly confines of Bryant-Denny Stadium, and until the untimely loss of Closner, Bama was perfect in Tuscaloosa. Even the one loss was an overtime affair at the hands of powerful LSU. Bama got wins over Arkansas, Florida, and Tennessee at home.

This year the Crimson Tide must go to Fayetteville and Gainesville and Knoxville and Baton Rouge, and that makes the schedule look tougher. And even though the home schedule looks relatively easy (Auburn being the notable exception), it must be remembered that Bama went to the last play to beat Ole Miss last year. Vanderbilt is rebuilding (the Commodores lost their outstanding quarterback) and Mississippi State is building.

But it would be a mistake to be fooled into thinking a team like Florida will look anything like the group of Gators that was trampled in Tuscaloosa last fall. Florida Coach Urban Meyer was expected by most observers to be likely to run into trouble with his WAC-style offense in the SEC, but he showed shortly after the 31-3 loss to Bama that he is flexible. He will have good players and a good team and The Swamp will be a tough place for the Crimson Tide.

Almost anyone would agree that Alabama was a bit lucky to pull out the win over Tennessee in Tuscaloosa last year. Although there have been a number of close games in this series, most going in favor of the Vols in recent years, Tennessee is one of those teams that has excellent recruiting every year and still has more quality, experienced players than Bama. Knoxville will be a tough place.

Arkansas has had better luck against Alabama than most would have expected. To be sure, some of that luck has come courtesy of sloppy SEC officiating, but the Razorbacks have also been very physical.

LSU and Auburn have the most talent in the SEC Western Division and those are the two league teams that had wins over Bama last year and have modest winning streaks against the Tide, LSU three consecutive wins, Auburn four.

Another part of "schedule luck" is where on the schedule the game falls. (It's probably not all luck that during the Roy Kramer years as SEC commissioner that Tennessee got open dates before tough games. And, in fact, many SEC Alabama opponents got open dates before playing the Tide.) This year four teams play traditional weak sisters, either Vanderbilt or Kentucky, before playing Bama. Tennessee, of course, has an open date. Vandy has to go to Michigan before playing Alabama and LSU and Auburn have tough games–LSU playing at Tennessee and Auburn hosting Georgia.

Although it is likely Alabama will have problems with some or all of its non-conference opponents (Bama's maddening recent history of playing down to weaker competition), that slate is more embarrassing than intimidating. A line-up of Hawaii, Louisiana-Monroe, Duke, and Florida International earns Bama some derision on the national scene. Still, as Alabama continues to work its way out of the problems brought about by the NCAA penalties, the scheduling philosophy is understandable.

Alabama will go into the 2006 season with a positive attitude, in part because in all pre-season analysis it will be mentioned that Alabama is coming off a 10-2 season with an impressive win over a good team in the Cotton Bowl. Teams that win bowl games often have a psychological leg up on teams that lost their final games.

Although virtually every returning Alabama player has spent the entire summer in Tuscaloosa, joined by many newcomers for at least part of the summer, there will be a special feeling in the air when players report for pre-season camp on August 7. Schools are permitted to have 105 players in practice prior to the start of classes. The first three days of fall camp are NCAA mandated shorts/no contact days, then there are two more days of just one practice for acclimation, also by NCAA rule. Then the Tide will be able to work twice a day on alternate days until the beginning of classes on August 23. The start of classes also allows the expansion of the squad, although Bama ordinarily keeps the squad at no more than about 120. That's partly because Shula does not want practices unwieldy, partly because it helps Alabama avoid Title IX issues.

And on September 2, the largest crowd ever to attend a football game in the state of Alabama will watch as Bama opens the 2006 season hosting Hawaii. ■

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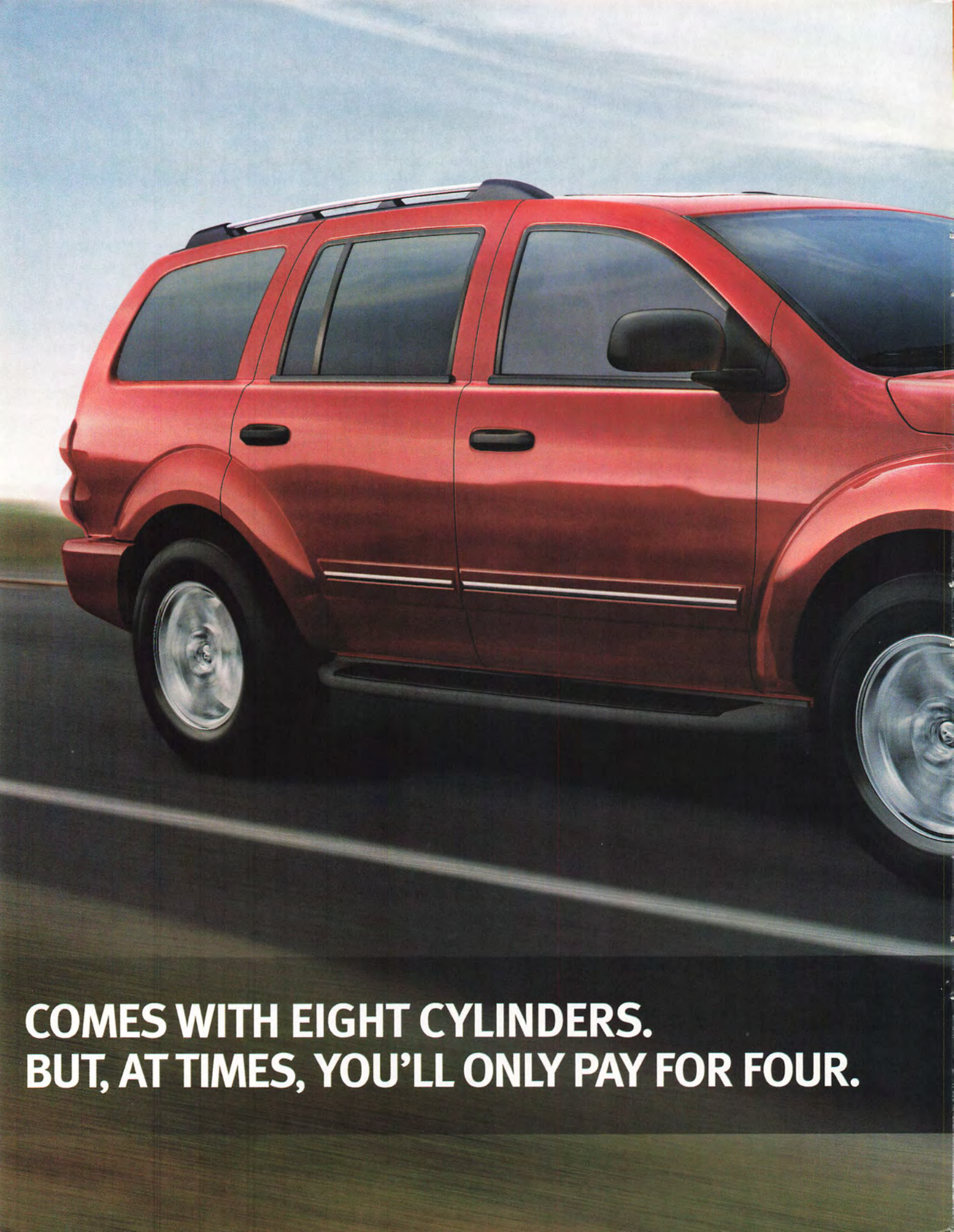
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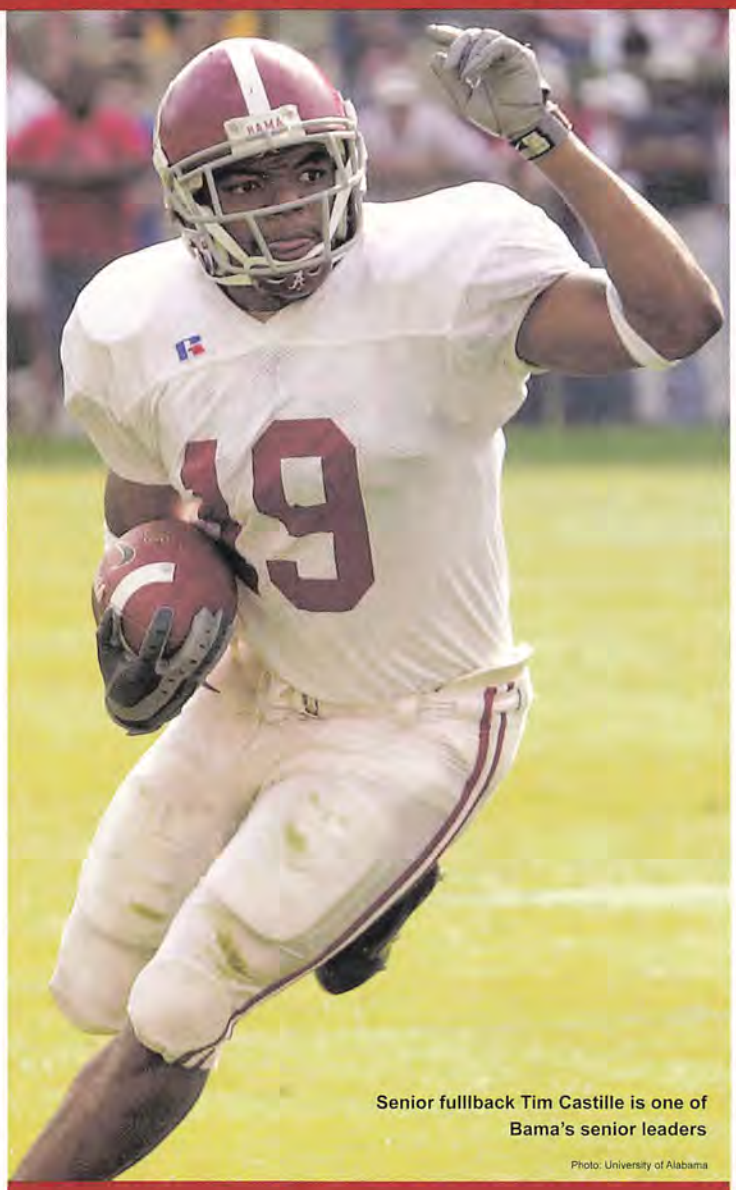
BUCKLE UP

By Kirk McNair



Senior fulllback Tim Castille is one of Bama's senior leaders

Photo: University of Alabama

2006 Offensive Depth Chart

Split End (Newcomers may work into playing rotation)
Keith Brown, Matt Caddell, Aaron McDaniel, Mike McCoy
Left Tackle (Capps held on in spring, but Smith may challenge)
Chris Capps, Mike Johnson, Cody Davis, Andre Smith, Alex Stadler
Left Guard (Position is open because of move of Caldwell)
Marlon Davis, Justin Moon, Justin Britt
Center (Despite lack of experience, this looks strong)
Antoine Caldwell, Evan Cardwell, David Ross
Right Guard (Stabler emerged as starter in 2005)
B.J. Stabler, Scott Deaton
Right Tackle (Senior Tatum is leader of O-Line)
Kyle Tatum, Trent Davidson, Drew Davis, Taylor Pharr
Tight End (Young, but talented, deep and experienced)
Travis McCall, Nick Walker, Charles Hoke, Cole Harvey, Preston Dial
Flanker (If Prothro can play, he,ll be number one)
D.J. Hall, Nikita Stover, Will Oakley, Javier Arenas, Tyrone Prothro
Quarterback (Freshman Alexander may move to play early)
John Parker Wilson, Marc Guillon, Jimmy Barnes, Greg McElroy, Earl Alexander
Halfback (Darby leads a large, talented group)
Kenneth Darby, Jimmy Johns, Roy Upchurch, Ali Sharrief, Glen Coffee, Mike Ford, Terry Grant
Fullback (Two fine seniors will split playing time)
LéRon McClain, Tim Castille, Baron Huber, Patrick Hanrahan, Will Denniston

With inexperienced quarterback, this could be the year of the tailback

The Offense

As Alabama began the 2005 season, the focus was on a handful of players who had been injured the previous year. There were concerns about halfback Kenneth Darby, recovering from surgery for a sports hernia, and fullback Tim Castille, coming off knee surgery. And most of all, Alabama fans worried about the health of quarterback Brodie Croyle, who had the reputation of being somewhat frail owing to shoulder and knee injuries that had sidelined him for much of his career, including most of 2004.

Alabama Coach Mike Shula was confident the trio would be ready to go, and he planned to put much of the offense on the shoulders of the talented Croyle. Neither the confidence nor the plan was off target. The three played meaningful roles in Alabama's offense in a successful 10-2 season and number eight final national ranking.

The decision to put such great dependence on the play of Croyle was because of his physical skills, intelligence, and leadership qualities. Croyle responded by putting his name all over the Alabama record book, a book that includes some pretty famous quarterback names.

That was then and this is now. Croyle is gone. But Darby and Castille and a host of other running backs are in the Alabama stable. Meanwhile, the quarterback of 2006 is almost without experience.

In 2006, Alabama will return a little over 110 per cent of its 2005 rushing offense production. It's easy to understand how, of course. That is possibly the case at several schools returning top running backs and losing quarterbacks.

Alabama had 1,710 net rushing yards last season. Among those with rushing yardage are two who are not returning, and both had negative net rushing yards in 2005–quarterback Brodie Croyle, of course, with minus 156 and Brandon Brooks with minus 3. Additionally, the team was charged with 15 yards in losses (taking a knee yardage).

So Alabama returns 1,884 yards of rushing offense, 110.2 per cent.

Top returning rusher is Kenneth Darby, who had 239 carries for 1,242 yards. It's a big drop to second. Jimmy Johns had 38 carries for 202 net yards.

Others returning are Glen Coffee with 48 carries for 179 net yards, Tim Castille 45-124, Tyrone Prothro 9-92, LéRon McClain 8-39, Keith Brown 2-12, and quarterback John Parker Wilson, who is in the negative category with 3 for -6.

Things are not so good in the passing category with Wilson having passed for 98 yards, only 3.8 per cent of the 2,597 passing yards. Croyle had the other 96.2 per cent with 2,499 yards. Marc Guillon did not have a completion. Croyle had 202 of the 209 completions, so the Tide returns only 3.3 per cent in that category.

On the other hand, most of the receiving yards are back. Alabama returns 200 of the 209 receptions (95.7 per cent) and 2,529 of the 2,597 yards (97.4 per cent).

D.J. Hall is the leading returning receiver with 48 catches for 676 yards, followed by Keith Brown with 34 for 642, Tyrone Prothro 17-325, Matt Caddell 13-179, LéRon McClain 18-140, Kenneth Darby 19-132, Zeke Knight 11-126, Nick Walker 9-120, Glen Coffee 8-91, Tim Castille 10-56, and Travis McCall 3-22.

Some of those yards won't actually be back, Knight having moved to defense, and perhaps Prothro because he may not be recovered from injury.

Receptions graduated are Matt Miller with 4 for 52, Brandon Brooks 2-20, Marcus McKnight 2-13, and Kyle Bennett 1-3.

Alabama scored 263 points in 2005, and including the team (which is credited with a safety and two points), Bama returns 239 of those points, 90.9 per cent. The lost points–6 each–are Croyle, Miller (on a fumble recovery while covering a kickoff), kicker Ryan Saxby, and defensive tackle Rudy Griffin.

Top returning scorer is placekicker Jamie Christensen, who was good on 25 of 26 extra point kicks and 16 of 25 field goals (is there anyone who doesn't remember No. 16?) for 73 points.

All other points were scored on touchdowns. Tim Castille had 42 points, D.J. Hall 30, Keith Brown 24, Tyrone Prothro and Kenneth Darby 18, LéRon McClain 12, and Glen Coffee, Zeke Knight, and John Parker Wilson 6 each.

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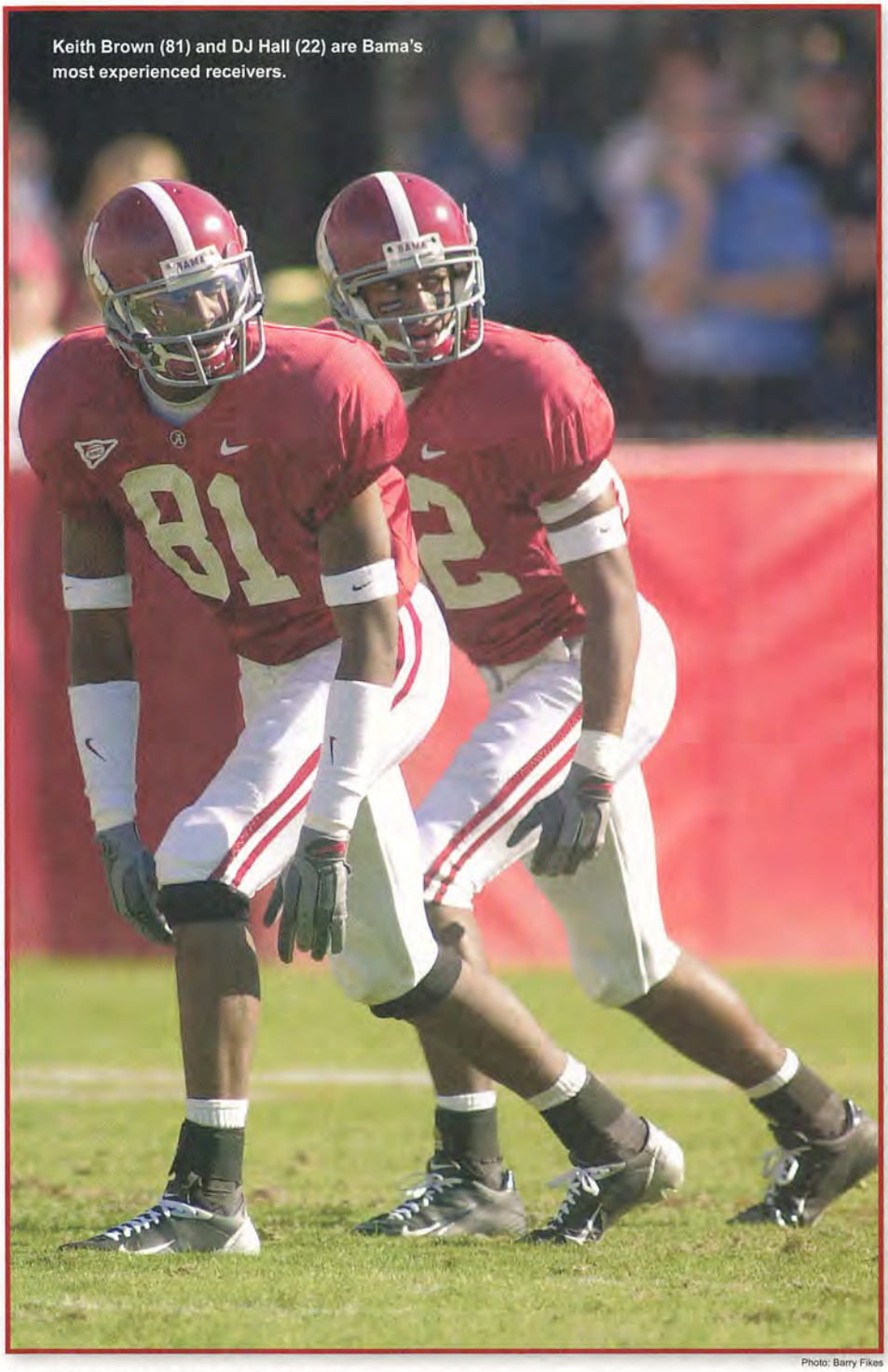
It's good to be able to run the football. Having a high pass efficiency rating is a positive. But the bottom line is that an offense is judged by the points it scores. For a 10-2 football team, Alabama's 2005 football team was something less than a scoring juggernaut.

Alabama was one of the nation's top teams in terms of the offense keeping the football. The Crimson Tide had time of possession of 32:55 per game, first in the Southeastern Conference and nearly six minutes per game more than its opponents. The Tide was third in the SEC and 22nd in the nation in turnover margin, getting the ball eight more times total (20-12) on fumble recoveries and interceptions than Bama lost the ball.

That time of possession figure came with Alabama managing to finish only seventh in the SEC in total offense, averaging 358.9 yards per game and 5.3 yards per play.

Bama was sixth in the SEC in rushing offense with 142.5 yards per game and sixth in the league in passing offense with 216.4 yards per game.

And Alabama was only eighth in the SEC in scoring, averaging 21.9 points per game. That was 85th in the nation.



Keith Brown (81) and DJ Hall (22) are Bama's most experienced receivers.

Photo: Barry Fikes

A frequently cited statistic is Red Zone scoring, the number of times an offense is successful in scoring from the opponents' 20-yard line and closer. Alabama was eighth in the SEC in that category, scoring 32 of 42 times for 76.2 per cent. Bama scored 18 touchdowns (nine rushing and nine passing) and kicked 14 field goals in 18 attempts. One Tide drive in the Red Zone was killed by a fumble and another by a pass interception, and four times Alabama lost the ball on downs.

By comparison, LSU scored 42 of 45 times the Bengal Tigers were in the Red Zone. Moreover, 69 per cent of the time LSU got a touchdown. Bama's 18 touchdowns in 42 Red Zone appearances was only 43 per cent.

Of Alabama's 149 drives, the Tide scored touchdowns on 28 of them, tried field goals 27 times (making 17), punted 67 times, lost the ball on downs eight times, allowed the clock to run out eight times, and suffered 11 turnovers.

The offense scored 249 of the Tide's 263 points.

Alabama averaged 1.67 points per drive. By comparison, Auburn averaged 2.61 points per drive on the Tigers' 140 drives.

Alabama got points 30.2 per cent of the time when it had the football and scored touchdowns 18.8 per cent of the time. Bama ranked eighth in the SEC in getting points and only ninth in getting touchdowns.

One problem Alabama had was its average starting field position being only the Bama 29-yard line. The Crimson Tide was around the middle of the SEC pack in averaging 5.46 plays and 28.9 yards per drive.

Alabama's 30 touchdowns (eighth in the SEC and 20 fewer than league-leader Auburn) included one scored by special teams and one scored by the defense. The offense scored 28 touchdowns (eighth in the league), 12 rushing (ninth in the SEC) and 16 passing (seventh in the conference).

[Mississippi State was the only SEC team to have no touchdowns by its special teams or defense. All 19 touchdowns scored by the Bulldogs were scored by the State offense. Ironically, Alabama had two touchdowns not scored by the offense, and both came against Mississippi State. Jimmy Johns caused a fumble on kickoff coverage that was recovered by Matt Miller and run in for a touchdown. And defensive tackle Rudy Griffin intercepted a pass and returned it for a touchdown in Bama's 17-0 win.]

A look at last year's performance and this year's depth chart is all it takes to predict that Alabama's offense this fall will be built around the running game. Here's a look at the Tide by position going into fall camp:

QUARTERBACK

John Parker Wilson has the job of taking over for Brodie Croyle, who was drafted by the Kansas City Chiefs this year. Although just a sophomore, Wilson has been on Alabama's campus since the fall of 2004 and has been participating with the Crimson Tide offense since practice prior to the Music City Bowl at the end of that season.

In a conversation with Croyle following 2005 summer workouts, Croyle said that Wilson showed signs of being a future star for the Crimson Tide. While Wilson was the back-up quarterback to Croyle

last year, that didn't mean much. Croyle went the distance in most games. Wilson had limited duty in only four games.

Though Wilson doesn't have quite the quick release of Croyle (not many quarterbacks do), Wilson does have the same strong arm that Croyle does. The big thing Wilson needs is experience. He didn't get much of it last year as a back-up, which means On The Job Training at the critical position this fall.

One concern with Croyle at quarterback was his seeming frailness, even though he held up well as a senior. Wilson should be less vulnerable. For one thing, he is very quick, an above average runner. Additionally, he has some thickness at 6-2, 215, meaning he can withstand those hits he doesn't avoid.

A reasonable assumption is that Wilson will rank about the middle of the pack in effectiveness among SEC quarterbacks when the season begins, and that the sophomore has a huge upside, getting better as the 2006 season goes along and developing into an excellent quarterback for 2007 and 2008.

Alabama has a senior quarterback in Marc Guillon, who has a little more experience than Wilson. But Guillon's experience is not all good. He started two games at quarterback for Alabama after Croyle was injured in 2004, and Bama lost both those games–to Arkansas and South Carolina–and Guillon was not effective. Later it was learned that Guillon had been trying to play with a back injury.

Now he has another ailment, and it's not a football injury. In what was reported as an altercation in an adult establishment, Guillon suffered a broken right (throwing) hand. While he should be recuperated for the start of fall camp, the 6-3, 212-pound senior will have missed valuable off-season work in the summer's pass skeleton drills.

It could be that the circumstances of the injury will hurt him more than just physically. While Alabama has had a number of quarterbacks over the years who conceivably could have been in the same circumstances, one of those quarterbacks was not Mike Shula, a straight arrow. Shula might look upon the event as a would-be leader not setting a good example.

Jimmy Barnes, the 6-5, 2255-pound redshirt freshman, is the son of a coach and has some good quarterback skills. But he is more than a little inexperienced. He has had very little work in Alabama's offense. As a true freshman last fall he ran the scout team, meaning he was familiar with the plays of Bama's opponents, not those of the Crimson Tide. With pressure on the coaching staff to develop a replacement for Croyle in the spring, Barnes was the man left out. Tide coaches worked with the two men already familiar with the offense and with at least a smidgen of Alabama game experience, Wilson and Guillon.

The most unlikely position for a freshman to be able to work into the playing rotation is quarterback, which puts the odds heavily against freshmen Greg McElroy and Earl Alexander.

McElroy, 6-2, 210, was 5A Offensive Player of the Year in Texas as he passed for 4,687 yards and 56 touchdowns at Carroll High School in Southlake last fall. But he was playing only his first year as a starting quarterback. He had been spotted in Alabama's football camp the previous summer, but he was not a Tide recruiting target until after the celebrated Tim Tebow picked Florida over Alabama.

Although everyone in the know says Alexander will get a shot at quarterback, the 6-4, 208-pounder from Phenix City is such an athlete that just about everyone who is not in the know thinks the outstanding athlete will be moved to wide receiver, where he has a chance to make an immediate contribution.

HALFBACK

Kenneth Darby is everything a coach could want in a talented tailback (halfback in Alabama's terminology). And not only does Bama have Darby, the Crimson Tide has a talented group of youngsters battling for playing time behind Darby.

Say what you want about other runners in the SEC, Darby has a chance to eclipse some giants in the Bama record book. In fact, he's already gone by a

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handful of former Alabama greats. And he'll also have his degree when Bama opens the 2006 season. All-in-all, Shula and company have to be very glad that Darby was close enough to a number of worthwhile goals to return to The Capstone for his final campaign.

The 5-11, 205-pounder was All-SEC as a junior. He heads into his senior year looking to become the first player in storied Alabama history to rush for over 1,000 yards in three consecutive seasons. He currently has 2,489 yards (seventh on Alabama's career list) and needs 1,080 yards to break the current record held by NFL MVP Shaun Alexander (3,565). Darby had 1,062 yards in 2004 and had 1,242 last season. He has averaged 5.1 yards per rush in his career. He has 10 career 100-yard rushing games.

Alabama has depth and talent behind Darby, although there is not a great deal of experience. Jimmy Johns (6-2, 220) and Glen Coffee (6-0, 207) were Bama back-ups last year, but Coffee was unable to participate in spring drills because of injury and Johns finished as the top back-up. Most expect Coffee (who played in every 2005 game and had 48 carries for 179 yards) to return this year, but there also is a school of thought that suggests he might be redshirted, or even moved to the wide receiver position where depth is a problem.

Johns is an intriguing talent. A top high school quarterback, he is a powerful runner who rushed for 202 yards on 38 carries. And he has the ability to be a pass-catcher or pass-thrower from the backfield. He can also go under center.

One of the major surprises of spring practice was the play of Roy Upchurch (6-0, 207). He was unable to play as a freshman after undergoing pre-season ankle surgery, and it was expected he would do little in spring drills. But he was outstanding and is expected to challenge for playing time this fall.

Ali Sharrief (5-10, 190) has already been redshirted, and he looks to rank no better than fourth or fifth on the halfback depth chart. Alabama doesn't want to get too thin at the position, but surely someone is considering that Sharrief is a very tough guy, someone who was an outstanding linebacker in high school and who was projected by some to be a strong safety at the college level.

Alabama will have one or two incoming freshmen with outstanding credentials. There is no doubt Terry Grant, 5-10, 188, Mr. Football in Mississippi (as had been Jimmy Johns the year before), will be in camp. The Crimson Tide is hopeful that Mike Ford, 6-2, 205, an outstanding talent from Sarasota, Florida, will be able to complete his academic requirements (he spent the 2005-06 year at Hargrave Academy in Virginia).

Less than two years ago, as Alabama prepared for the 2004 Music City Bowl, Theo Townsend was a survivor, one of the few running backs not injured, and the 5-9, 172-pounder was listed as Bama's number one halfback. As it turned out, he did not play in that game and has seen only limited duty, which is likely his fate in 2006.

FULLBACK

There are times when another name could be added to the halfback list. Tim Castille gets a lot of the glory that could have gone to Darby and other Tide players. In short yardage situations, including those situations close to the goalline, Bama goes with its jumbo package, which means Castille is in at halfback behind LéRon McClain at fullback.

McClain took over as the starter midway through the 2004 season when Castille suffered a season-ending knee injury. McClain kept that starting job last

Kenneth Darby will try for third 1,000 yard season.

Photo: University of Alabama

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year, although he and Castille were considered co-first team.

Although it may not have been apparent to spectators, Castille said that he was still affected by the knee injury last fall. In the spring he said he was completely recovered.

And so the 6-1, 256-pound McClain and the 5-11, 236-pound Castille–both seniors–go into the 2006 season as co-number one at fullback, making it one of Bama's most talented positions.

Alabama is in the mainstream among teams that continue to use a fullback, meaning that job one is blocking–run blocking and pass protection. The fullback gets an occasional bone, either a rushing opportunity or as a pass receiver, but most of his work is without the football.

One of the more dramatic moves of the spring was that of Baron Huber, 6-4, 238. Huber came to Alabama as a linebacker, but worked primarily at defensive end as a member of the scout team last fall in his true freshman year. In the spring he moved to fullback and did very well.

Fullback was also the position chosen for Patrick Hanrahan, the 6-0, 245-pound freshman son of former Tider Gary Hanrahan. A high school tailback, Hanrahan was outstanding as a blocking fullback in the spring.

Will Denniston, a 6-3, 221-pound junior walk-on, works at both fullback and tight end.

TIGHT END

Although Shula would like for the tight end to be a primary receiver and more involved in the offense as a pass-catcher, thus far the position has been similar to fullback–a blocker on run plays and protection man on pass plays with only an occasional reception opportunity.

Also like fullback, Alabama has proven commodities returning to the position, albeit much younger men than at fullback.

Nick Walker, a 6-5, 245-pound sophomore, started most of last year at tight end, first team in the first 11 games. He had nine catches for 120 yards, but probably should have had more receptions. And that may be the reason he was not the starter in the Cotton Bowl and was not number one in spring practice. Those honors went to another upcoming sophomore, Travis McCall, 6-2, 250. McCall was no pass-catching star, either, with three grabs for 22 yards on the season, but whoever is tight end will be expected to be a receiver this fall.

Charles Hoke had been expected by many to be redshirted as a freshman, but the 6-6, 240-pound nephew of former Tider Dexter Wood got playing time in seven games last year. He had a good spring and should get more playing time this fall.

One of the surprise moves of the spring was that of grayshirt freshman Cole Harvey to tight end. Harvey, 6-3, 265, was signed as an offensive lineman. During bowl practice he did some work at fullback. Then in the spring he made the move to tight end.

After several disappointments in recent years in attempts to sign tight end prospects, the Crimson Tide staff has been very productive on that recruiting front. And this season brings in another talented newcomer, true freshman Preston Dial (6-4, 242). It is not unrealistic to expect Dial to be redshirted.

WIDE RECEIVER

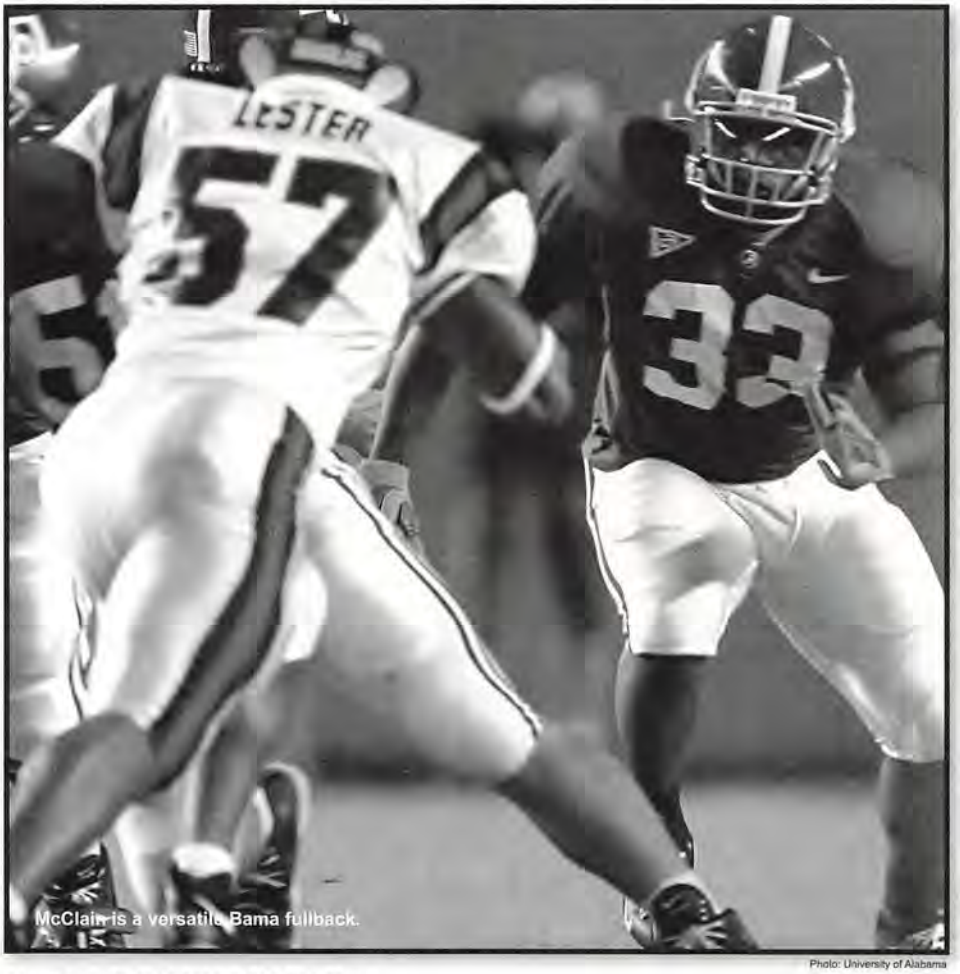
The depth chart at wide receiver could get quite a shake-up if Tyrone Prothro is able to return this season. The 5-8, 178-pound Prothro was among the most accomplished receivers in the nation last year before being lost for the season with a broken leg. The complicated injury has had Prothro on the sidelines and off his feet since last October, and no one is predicting when he might be able to return. If he can get back this season, he'll go back to his spot as a number one flanker. His numbers–17 catches for 325 yards, 19.1 yards per catch, and three touchdowns–don't begin to tell the value of Prothro to the Bama offense. A rival defensive coach suggested that half an opponent's preparation time for Alabama was spent on trying to find a way to stop Prothro.

Alabama has experienced starters at both split end and flanker even without Prothro. But there is little experienced depth at the two positions. Alabama coaches will expect the junior veterans, Keith Brown at split end and D.J. Hall at flanker, both 6-3, 190, to step up their games to help the inexperienced Bama quarterback. Brown has been flashy and Hall more consistent in their first two seasons. Hall was Bama's leading receiver with 48 catches for 676 yards (14.1 yards per catch) and five touchdowns. He had 10 catches against Tennessee and 11 the next week against Utah State, the first receiver in Alabama history to record back-to-back double-digit receiving games. Brown had 34 catches for 642 yards and four touchdowns, and finished with a big game–five catches for 141 yards and the Tide's lone touchdown in the 13-10 Cotton Bowl win over Texas Tech.

Another junior, Matt Caddell, 6-0, 181,has not been as productive, but had a good spring at split end. Aaron McDaniel, 6-1, 180, made the move from defensive back to split end in the spring. Incoming freshman Mike McCoy, 6-3, 195, is also penciled in at split end and has an opportunity for playing time.

Other than Hall, the flanker position has been hit with the injury bug. Nikita Stover, a 6-1, 200-pound junior college transfer with three years to play, entered Alabama in January in order to go through spring practice. Shula emphasized that Stover (the number one prospect in Alabama the year that wide receivers such as Prothro, Caddell and former Florida star Chad Jackson were all prep seniors) is further along because of coming in early, but also stressed that Stover is not near as far along as he needs to be. That's partly because he missed much spring work with a muscle pull. Will Oakley knows his way around the training room. He missed all of 2004 with a pulled hamstring, then after an excellent 2005 fall camp was out most of last season with another pulled muscle. Oakley, 6-1, 188, was injured again in the spring.

Although Javier Arenas is listed as a defensive back in Alabama's roster of signees, those who have seen the 5-9, 175-pound incoming freshman from



McClain is a versatile Bama fullback.

Photo: University of Alabama

Tampa, Florida, believe he will be at wide receiver. And they think he may get early playing time.

TACKLE

Everyone seems to be able to see the left tackle and no one seems to like what they see on the Alabama offensive line. But Chris Capps actually played pretty well as a first-year starter as a sophomore last season. And while Alabama had some blocking problems late in the season, they were more related to losing JB Closner at center than to the performance of the 6-6, 286-pound Capps. Still, the Tide staff is looking for improvement at the position. They had expected Capps to be challenged by 6-7, 280-pound sophomore Cody Davis in the spring, but Davis missed contact work because of shoulder surgery. Mike Johnson (6-6, 285), a promising redshirt freshman, had an up-and-down spring at left tackle.

This is a position where true freshmen would ordinarily not be expected to be able to help, but Alabama isn't bringing in ordinary freshmen. Andre Smith, 6-5, 315, was considered the number one offensive lineman in the nation among senior prospects last year, and he's expected to get a shot at left tackle. Also listed as a left tackle candidate is 6-6, 300-pound signee Alex Stadler.

Senior Kyle Tatum, 6-7, 290, made the switch from defensive tackle to offensive tackle prior to the 2004 season. He struggled a great deal in that first season on offense and he continued to struggle at times last year. But he made great improvement and is the Tide leader on the offensive line going into 2006.

Prior to last fall, many expected sophomore Trent Davidson to get the tight end job, but Davidson, 6-5, 270, suffered a broken foot that required surgery. And this spring he was moved to offensive right tackle. He never seemed to be enthusiastic about the move, but if he gets motivated he could be a very fine offensive tackle. He's working against redshirt freshman Drew Davis (6-6, 290), and more competition will enter in August in the form of 6-6, 270-pound Taylor Pharr.

GUARD

Alabama was fortunate last year to have two redshirt freshmen earn starting jobs at the offensive guard spots. One of those, Antoine Caldwell, has since moved to center, but B.J. Stabler, 6-4, 295, was a freshman all-star last year. He will be the starter at right guard, while Marlon Davis, a 6-4, 315-pound sophomore who had one start and limited back-up action at right guard last fall, will start out number one at left guard in August.

Alabama doesn't have just tons of depth at defensive tackle, so it was a bit of a surprise that coaches elected to move Justin Britt from the defensive side to offensive right guard in the spring. Although the 6-4, 294-pound Britt didn't get a lot of practice time in the spring as he recuperated from late-2005 season shoulder surgery, he did show that he can be an offensive lineman in the mold of his older brother, Wesley (now an offensive tackle with the New England Patriots). Also working at right guard is 6-5, 290-pound junior Justin Moon.

Stabler is backed at left guard by 6-5, 270-pound redshirt freshman Scott Deaton, the son of former Alabama player Ken Deaton. Deaton was a tackle on the scout team last fall.

CENTER

In 1978, Southern Cal defeated Alabama. But later in the season, the Trojans were upset. In that loss, USC lost not just the starting center, but also the back-up center. The offense was unable to function. The center is exceptionally important. He handles the football on every play and he makes the calls for offensive line blocking assignments. Last year when Bama lost Closner, the offensive line fell apart in the last two regular season games.

Bama was able to right the ship to an extent in the Cotton Bowl when starting left guard Antoine Caldwell (6-3, 296) moved to center. Bama didn't try any spread (shotgun) formation against Texas Tech because Caldwell hadn't mastered that snapping aspect. But in the spring he learned the skill.

A position that seemed so weak when Closner went down now seems very strong. Behind Caldwell is redshirt freshman Evan Cardwell (6-3, 290), who did an excellent job on the scout team last fall and who had a good spring. Also look for incoming freshman David Ross 6-4, 295) to get a look at center. ■

Kyle Tatum is a three-year starter at tackle

Photo: University of Alabama

Antoine Caldwell is Bama's most versatile lineman.

Photo: University of Alabama

By Thomas Murphy

John Parker Wilson
Learning More Than Plays

On a recent spring afternoon, John Parker Wilson got a "crash" course in the full magnitude of playing quarterback at The University of Alabama.

Wilson had popped into the offices of Alabama's media relations department on the ground floor of Coleman Coliseum to fulfill an interview request. He finished the 10-minute phone interview and was headed out the door when Brenda Burnette of the media relations staff gently called him back.

Burnette told him that one of the Southeastern Conference's television partners wanted to conduct a family interview at the Wilson home in Hoover. His mother, Susan, was an Alabama cheerleader, and his father, Parker, played baseball at West Alabama and in the Boston Red Sox farm system. (And younger brother, Ross, quarterbacked Hoover to the state championship last year and will be a senior this season.) Neat little Wilson family athletic feature for next fall's broadcasts. Which of these three days can you zip over to Birmingham and do the interivews?

"Does it get me out of my workout" for that day, Wilson asked with a grin, already knowing the answer.

Of course not, shot back Associate Athletics Director Larry White, now joining the conversation.

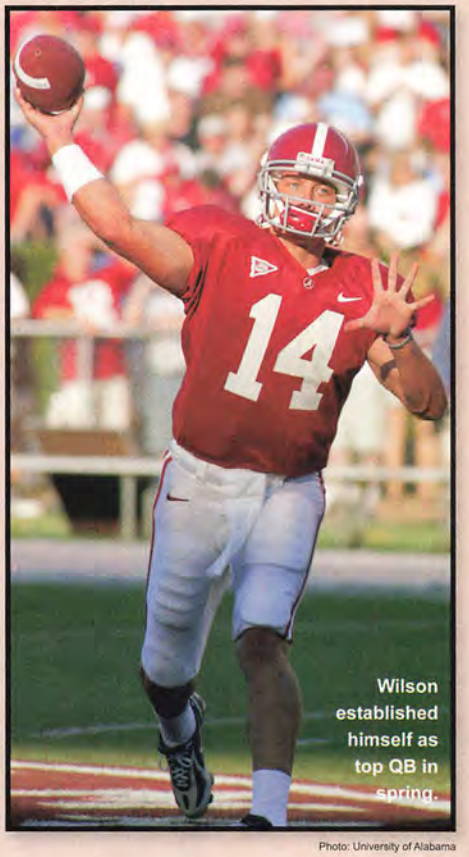
Then media relations assistant John Hayden eased over. You know, Sirius Radio has this morning show and they'd like you to do a segment one day soon. Thursday of this week? Okay, that's fine.

Wilson, knowing he had things to do in preparation for his daily workout, backpedaled toward the door.

Suddenly, wham!, the door flew open, thumping Wilson in the left shoulder. When the athletics department employee noticed whom she'd bumped with the door, she immediately began apologizing. Profusely.

Wilson, unhurt but turning slightly red-faced, took responsibility for standing in the doorway and brushed off the incident.

Talk about getting caught in the crossfire. If it's not meaty defensive linemen trying to collapse your rib cage, it's a door walloping you in an off-the-field, tranquil moment.



Wilson established himself as top QB in spring.

Photo: University of Alabama

Welcome to Wilson's world. Where everywhere you go around these parts, people know you. And want to stop you. Stop and chat, and ask about the football team and how he's going to do as the starting quarterback for the Crimson Tide.

Wilson already has an inkling of the fuss that attends the Tide quarterback. His arrest last October for driving under the influence sparked headlines across the state. He was adjudicated as a minor, so the proceedings went out of the public eye, but Wilson learned something valuable.

"You try to learn your lesson," Wilson said. "It's a tough lesson learned.

"That just comes with the job. You're going to play quarterback at Alabama, you've got to give up some stuff, and that's totally fine."

Wilson's spring, his first as the bonafide starter-in-training, got off to a rocky start. The first offense could barely generate a couple of first downs in the first scrimmage action.

"It was pretty embarrassing," Wilson said.

But the offense began to gain some synchronicity, Wilson's passing got sharper and the Crimson Tide offense departed spring on a solid note with some touchdown drives against its starting counterparts on defense.

"I feel really good, very confident," Wilson said during postgame interviews at the A-Day Game. "I feel the guys have confidence in me, so I'll use that going into summer workouts, going into the fall."

Wilson has factors working in his favor. Coming from the high-caliber program at Hoover, he's already used to playing with fast athletes all over the field. Also, he's of a sturdy physical build, already thicker and more muscular than Croyle was as a senior.

"I'm 215 pounds, and it's solid dude," Wilson said heading into spring.

"Physically, we feel very good about him being able to do all the things we do here," Alabama Coach Mike Shula said.

Wilson's snap-judgement decision-making is the area that must be tested over and over before Hawaii comes to call on September 2. Wilson has completed 7 of 11 passes for 98 yards and two touchdowns in his brief career. To his credit, he has engineered scoring drives at both South Carolina and Auburn.

"He's shown that he can handle situations," Alabama offensive coordinator David Rader said. "We just need to put him in those situations time and time again, so it won't be so new to him."

Don't mistake Wilson for his predecessor Brodie Croyle. He doesn't have quite the cannon right arm, and he'll be prone to more mistakes like throwing into coverage, as he did on a couple of occasions during the A-Day Game. But Wilson should be a stronger physical presence who will benefit from that great training at Hoover, plus a couple of springs in which he took a huge load of reps.

"Physically, he needs to keep getting stronger, needs to get quicker with his feet," Shula said. "He doesn't have to make great throws, he has to make great decisions."

And stay out of the way of doors. ■

Tide has to fill gaps to live up to recent reputation as one of best defenses

The Defense

Alabama lost seven starters from a defense that ranked second in the nation last year and shut down the unstoppable force of the Texas Tech offense in the Crimson Tide's Cotton Bowl victory. So Bama Defensive Coordinator Joe Kines needs to crack some funny lines and throw out another immovable object, right?

Oh, but were it so easy. There is little doubt that the folksy Kines will entertain in his meetings with players and sportswriters, but more than a wit, the veteran coach has earned a reputation as a wizard. He is now considered perhaps the nation's premier defensive coordinator. Still, defense isn't done with smoke and mirrors. Schemes matter, but the real secret is having good, tough athletes with a sound grounding in fundamentals.

The losses are huge. Alabama's leading tackler and the most honored player in Crimson Tide football history, DeMeco Ryans, is gone. So is second-leading tackler Roman Harper. And number three Freddie Roach. Bama lost two starters in the defensive line, end Mark Anderson and tackle Rudy Griffin. Two linebackers in Ryans and Roach. Two safeties in Harper and Charlie Peprah. And cornerback Anthony Madison. All seven will be in NFL training camps.

Kines knows there's no sense crying over spilt milk, but this must seem like BUTTERmilk (just guessing that Joe Kines likes a glass of cold buttermilk).

A sophisticated defense such as Alabama's is not always in the same alignment. While it is fair to say that Alabama's basic scheme is a 4-3 (that is four defensive linemen, three linebackers, and four defensive backs), it is never a surprise to see Bama in a nickel defense, with a fifth defensive back replacing either a defensive lineman or a linebacker. Alabama also uses the occasional dime defense, which is six defensive backs and a total of five men up front as either linebackers or linemen.

There are also times that Bama might be in a 3-4, which is three defensive linemen and four linebackers. Or a safety can sneak to the front for either a 4-4 or 5-3 scheme. Or the Tide might have a front that includes three defensive ends (one inside) and one tackle. And on it goes. On defense, there are no requirements as on offense that a certain number must be on the line of scrimmage or a limit as to the number who may not be on the line. Anything goes on defense.

In addition to the players, Head Coach Mike Shula had to make his first replacement of an on-the-field coach this spring when Paul Randolph went to Rice as defensive coordinator. Shula chose David Turner from Vanderbilt to coach Bama's defensive ends, and the spring verdict is that Alabama shouldn't miss a beat. Turner proved to be an excellent fit.

It starts up front, where Turner joins Buddy Wyatt (defensive tackles) in filling the gaps left by not only the graduations of Anderson and Griffin, but also the move of Justin Britt from defensive tackle to offensive guard.

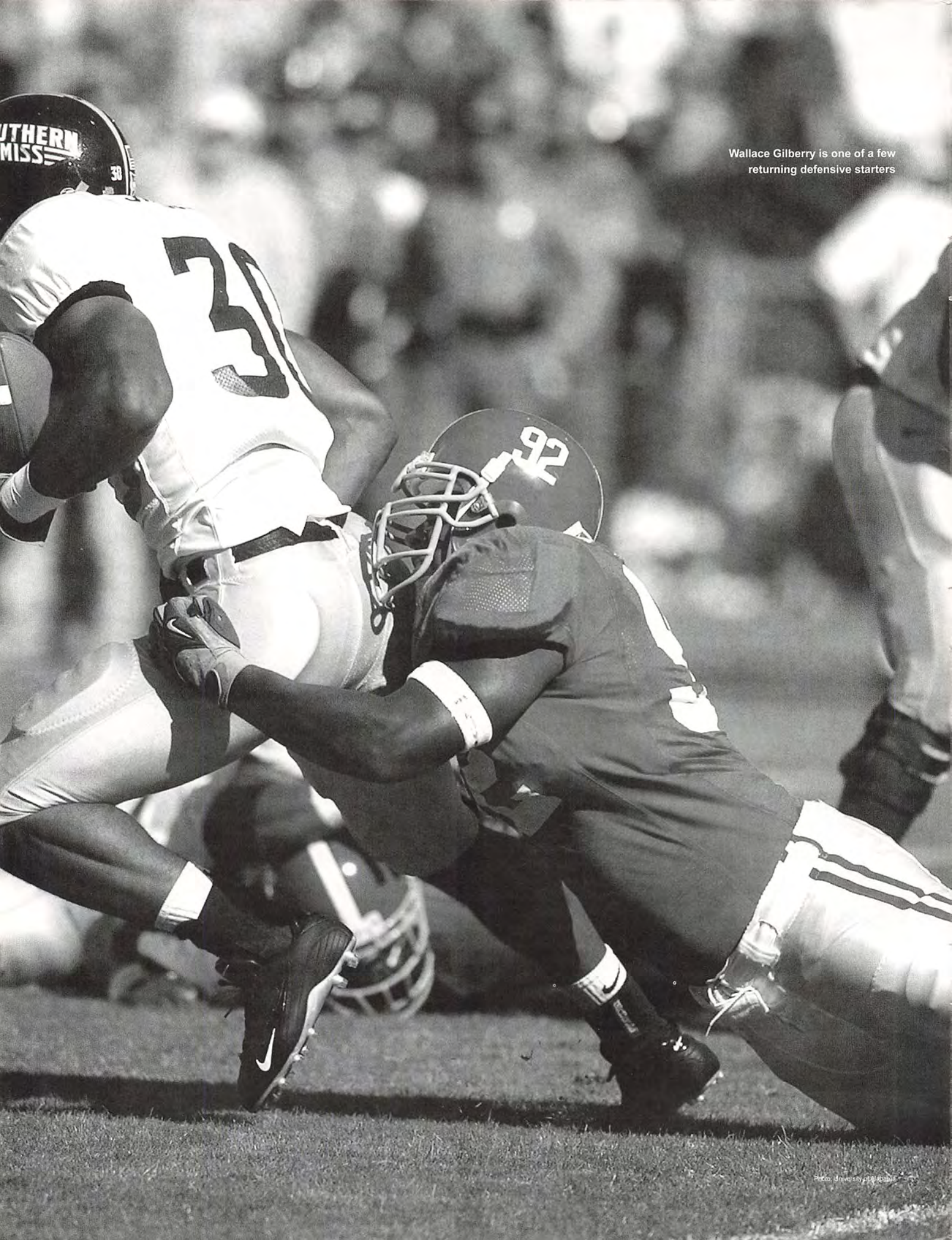
Fortunately, two of the most pleasant surprises of spring practice came in the defensive line.

END

At the right end spot vacated by Anderson, sophomore Bobby Greenwood–who was outstanding as a freshman back-up last fall–was expected to cakewalk into that first team spot. But junior Keith Saunders (6-3, 246) moved into the number one position early in spring drills and stayed there to the end ahead of Greenwood (6-6, 245). A new man at the position is converted wide receiver Ezekial Knight (6-3, 217). Knight is going to have to get bigger and stronger at his new position, but he was an outstanding defensive player in high school and indicated in the spring he still has those stop skills. His great quickness makes him an effective pass rusher, and he held his own better than might have been expected in run defense. Still, the big story at the

2006 Defensive Depth Chart

Left End (Gilberry was excellent as starter in 2005)
Wallace Gilberry, Chris Harris, Brandon Deaderick
Tackle (Clark is returning starter, but others are inexperienced)
Jeremy Clark, Alonzo Washington, Justin Johnson, Bryan Motley
Nose Tackle (Lee was injury free and had excellent spring)
Dominic Lee, J.P. Adams, Brandon Fanney, Byron Walton
Right End (Saunders had fine spring in battle to replace Anderson)
Keith Saunders, Bobby Greenwood, Zeke Knight, Milton Talbert
Strongside Linebacker (Jones has big shoes to fill with Ryans gone)
Terrence Jones, Zach Schreiber, Eryk Anders, Charlie Higginbotham
Middle Linebacker (Collins and Hall had good spring competition)
Matt Collins, Prince Hall, Darren Mustin, Ken Vandervoort, Charlie Kirschman
Weakside Linebacker (Simpson is leader of the defense)
Juwan Simpson, Demarcus Waldrop, Marcel Stamps, Chris Keys, LaBronski Hutchins
Left Cornerback (Robinson is only starter returning in secondary)
Ramzee Robinson, Chris Rogers, Travis Robinson, Jake Jones, Marcus Udell
Right Cornerback (Castille and Gary are neck-and-neck)
Simeon Castille, Eric Gray, Lionel Mitchell, Tremayne Coger, Marquis Johnson
Strong Safety (Dukes did well as nickel back starter in Cotton Bowl)
Jeffrey Dukes, Rashad Johnson, Travis Sikes, Cory Reamer, Justin Woodall
Safety (Carter was best in spring, but this is a concern)
Marcus Carter, Bryan Kilpatrick, Sam Burnthall, Andy Davis



Wallace Gilberry is one of a few returning defensive starters

Photo: University of Arkansas

position is Saunders. And since Greenwood is a proven commodity (last year he was in on 15 tackles, five for losses, and had three sacks and five quarterback pressures), the loss of Anderson is softened by the quality replacements.

On the other side, at left end, junior Wallace Gilberry (6-3, 254) returns for his second season as a starter. Last year he was among Bama's top defenders with 37 tackles (just behind Anderson's 40) and had 10 tackles for losses, two sacks, six quarterback pressures, a pass break-up, and a fumble recovery. He's backed by senior Chris Harris (6-5, 244), who was a solid back-up last year. Also in the mix is redshirt freshman Brandon Deaderick (6-4, 230). Defensive line signee Milton Talbert (6-3, 235) will probably be an end.

TACKLE

A bit of irony–tackles don't make many tackles in the Alabama defensive scheme. Last year left tackle Jeremy Clark was the leader in tackles by tackles with 18, followed by Rudy Griffin with 16.

Griffin was a team and crowd favorite at nose tackle, one of those over-achieving men who becomes an unlikely star (particularly when he grabbed a Mississippi State pass and trudged 17 yards into the end zone for a touchdown). There is no doubt that a favorite of the coaching staff in the spring was the play of popular Dominic Lee (6-2, 303). Lee, who was considered one of the nation's top line prospects as a prep senior, is now an Alabama senior. He had his moments in his first three seasons, but not as many as expected owing to a series of untimely injuries. He was in on four tackles last year. But he was healthy through the off-season and healthy in spring practice and emerged as number one at nose tackle.

Tackle positions are somewhat interchangeable, but at the end of spring practice it appeared that four men were being groomed for nose tackle play and only two for left tackle. Behind Lee at nose tackle is another senior, J.P. Adams. Although Adams, 6-3, 288, is always listed as a former walk-on, he has always been scholarship quality. The son of a professor at The University, he walked on when Bama was low on scholarships and was awarded a scholarship later. He was in on nine tackles last year. Behind him are redshirt freshmen Brandon Fanney (6-5, 270) and Byron Walton (6-4, 298).

Jeremy Clark, a 6-3, 305-pound senior, returns for his fourth year as a starting left tackle. After a redshirt season in 2002, he has been a first teamer, though last year he split playing time with Justin Britt. Lorenzo Washington, a 6-4, 265-pound redshirt freshman, was behind Clark in the spring. There could be some jockeying as Bama works on its depth chart in fall camp. Although Bryan Motley (6-2, 274) was signed as an offensive lineman, the incoming freshman is said to have a "defensive attitude," and he could get a look at defensive tackle.

LINEBACKER

The one returning starter at linebacker is the one that most casual Alabama fans would have the most difficulty recalling. He's not DeMeco Ryans, who was nationally prominent, and he's not Freddie Roach, part of a Bama Football Family. In fact, he's not even the same man Alabama signed a few years ago. Well, he's the same man, but he changed his name a couple of years ago from Juwan Garth to Juwan Simpson.

Juwan Simpson (6-3, 222) is Bama's returning starter at weakside linebacker, and he is a very good player. Simpson is the leading returning tackler for the Crimson Tide, no surprise since Alabama's defense calls for the linebackers to make tackles. Last year as a junior Simpson was in on 64 tackles, including six for losses. He was involved in two sacks, had a pair of interceptions, and four quarterback pressures.

The weakside linebacker–so named because he ordinarily lines up on the weak side of the offense, the side with fewer men (usually opposite the tight end)–often has greater pass coverage responsibility than the strongside linebacker, but all Alabama linebackers have a first responsibility to stop the run.

Simpson is backed by three returning starters who have all had a stint at secondary positions.

Demarcus Waldrop (5-11, 190) looks more like a safety than a linebacker, and he was given a look at safety. But he has been a play-maker as a back-up linebacker, and even got one start as a sophomore. In the spring the junior showed that he can be effective as a linebacker on both the weak and strong sides. Junior Marcel Stamps (6-3, 215) came to Alabama as a wide receiver. He has also had a little practice time in the secondary. Most of his playing time has come as a very fine player on special teams.

Alabama coaches were anxious to see sophomore Chris Keys (6-2, 205) at linebacker this spring. Keys had a little work at safety as a true freshman last fall, but most of his playing time was on kickoff and punt coverage. Unfortunately, in an off-season scuffle with a teammate, Keys suffered a serious injury, a broken ankle. Still, he has showed in the past that he is an excellent player and should figure into the playing rotation.

Alabama hasn't decided which signees will be at what positions, but at least three of them will be at linebacker. Most projections include LaBronski Hutchins (6-3, 190) at weakside. Alabama signed a large number of defensive backs and some of them could be moved to other positions, including linebacker.

There is a trend in football to go to small, fast linebackers, the kind of men who may have been high school defensive backs and then grown a bit for college play. There is also a trend to eliminate the middle linebacker, but that is not in vogue at Bama.

When Freddie Roach graduated, that middle linebacker position did not automatically fall to the back-up. Junior Matt Collins (6-1, 241), a former walk-on, has done surprisingly well at the position, particularly in short yardage situations. He has a knack for filling the hole against the running game. Last year he was in on 13 tackles. He started out number one in the spring and never lost that designation, but the man who was number two at middle linebacker at the start of spring training pulled at least even with Collins. Prince Hall (6-0, 240) arrived in Tuscaloosa last August a bit out of shape. But he wasn't out of shape this spring, and the athletic Hall showed why he was one of the nation's top prospects out of California.

Shula is anxious for the day when there is spirited competition for every job on the football field. He has it now at middle linebacker where Collins and Hall both are likely to have considerable playing time in 2006. Walk-on Ken Vandervoort (6-3, 216) and transfer Darren Mustin (6-2, 240), both juniors, are also at middle linebacker. Best bet for an incoming signee to get his chance in the middle is Charlie Kirschman (6-3, 225).

Mustin played at Middle Tennessee State and transferred to Alabama, sitting out last season to be eligible beginning this year.

It is Terrence Jones' task to limit the number of times people remember DeMeco Ryans in 2006. It will be the job of Jones, a 6-1, 220-pound senior, to step into the strongside linebacker position vacated by Ryans, who was the first 2005 Tide senior drafted by the NFL this year. (Ryans went to Houston, the first man taken in the second round.)

Jones had a decent junior season as a back-up, getting in on 21 tackles with four for loss and two sacks, three quarterback pressures, and a pass broken up. But that obviously pales in comparison to the statistics turned in by Ryans: 76 tackles, 16 for loss, and five sacks, an interception, two pass break-ups, four quarterback rushes, two fumble recoveries and a forced fumble.

There is virtually no experience behind Jones, except that Waldrop could play at strongside if needed. Otherwise, look for redshirt freshmen Zach Schreiber (6-2, 240), who had a very good spring, and Eryk Anders (6-2, 220), who is still making the adjustment from his high school days as a defensive lineman. Signee Charlie Higginbotham (6-0, 210) projects as a strongside linebacker.

Although Bama lost three of its four starters in the secondary, it may be a bit of a surprise to know that Alabama returns men from 2005 who

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accounted for 8 of the 11 pass interceptions, which is 72.7 per cent. Returning players with interceptions are Ramzee Robinson with 2 for 60 yards, Juwan Simpson 2-7, Simeon Castille 2-0, Chris Harris 1-14, and Jeffrey Dukes 1-0. The others were by Roman Harper 1-50, Rudy Griffin 1-17, and DeMeco Ryans 1-7.

Alabama signed nine men who were listed as defensive backs, so there is some guesswork involved in trying to decide where to place many of them. One guess is that Javier Arenas will be on offense at flanker. There's less to guess on Travis Sikes and Sam Burnthall, who participated in spring practice at strong safety and safety, respectively. Bama coaches are holding their breath on Justin Woodall, who not only could play several football positions, but who may also be a top baseball draft choice.

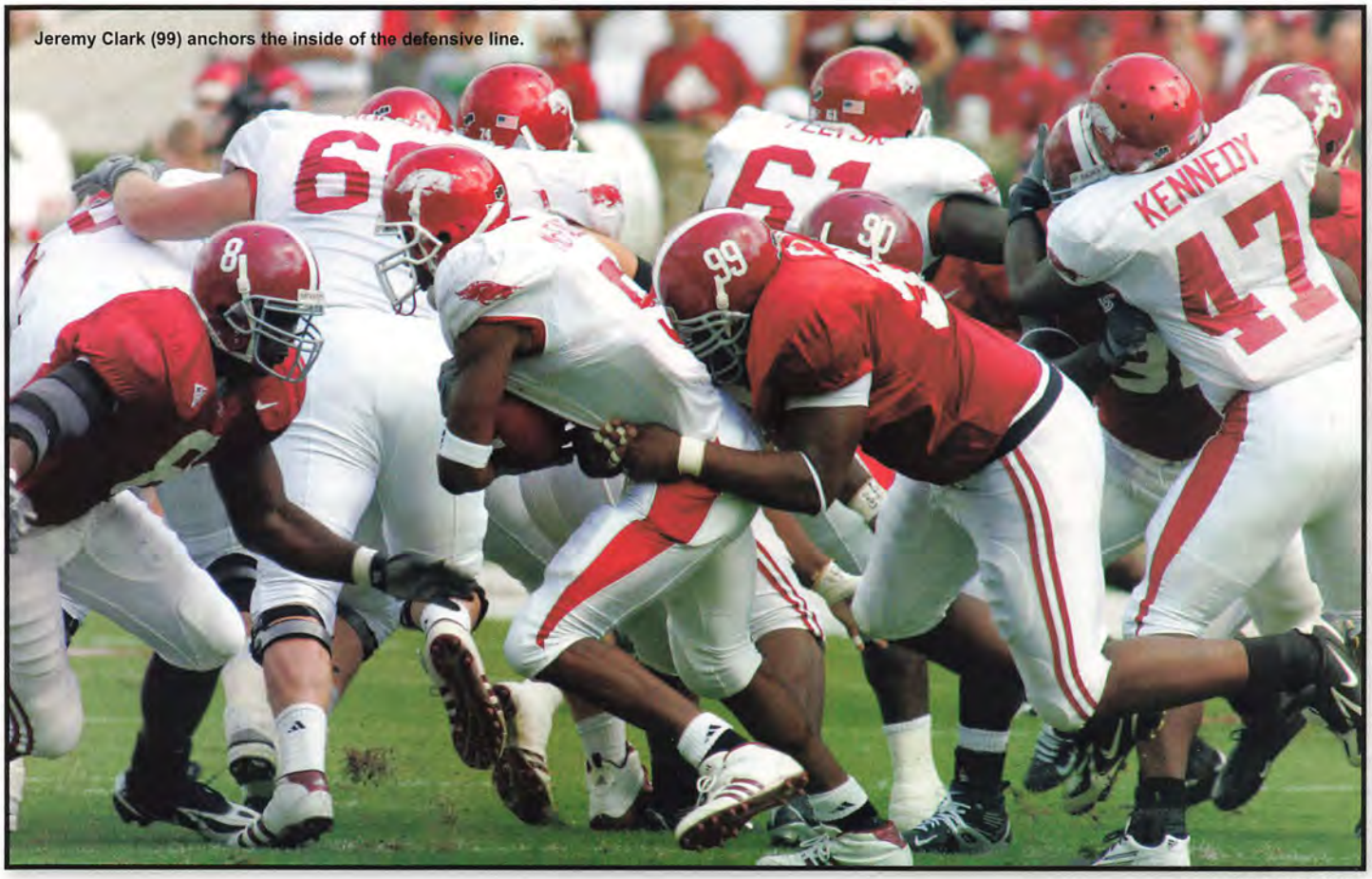
CORNERBACK

The one returning starter in the secondary is Ramzee Robinson, a 5-10, 190-pound senior who has been a starter the past two years and who was a regular as a freshman in 2003 at the important left cornerback position. (Most quarterbacks are right-handed and most passes go to the right side, meaning the left cornerback gets extra pressure.) He heads into his senior season with 23 consecutive starts. Although because of back and wrist injuries he did not participate in team work in the spring, he should be 100 per cent in August. He will also have his degree before Bama starts the 2006 season. Robinson was Alabama's interception leader in 2005 with two picks for 60 yards and also had seven pass break-ups and 32 tackles.

Through most of the spring Simeon Castille took Robinson's place at left cornerback. Most observers believe that Castille will be at the right cornerback spot vacated by Anthony Madison.

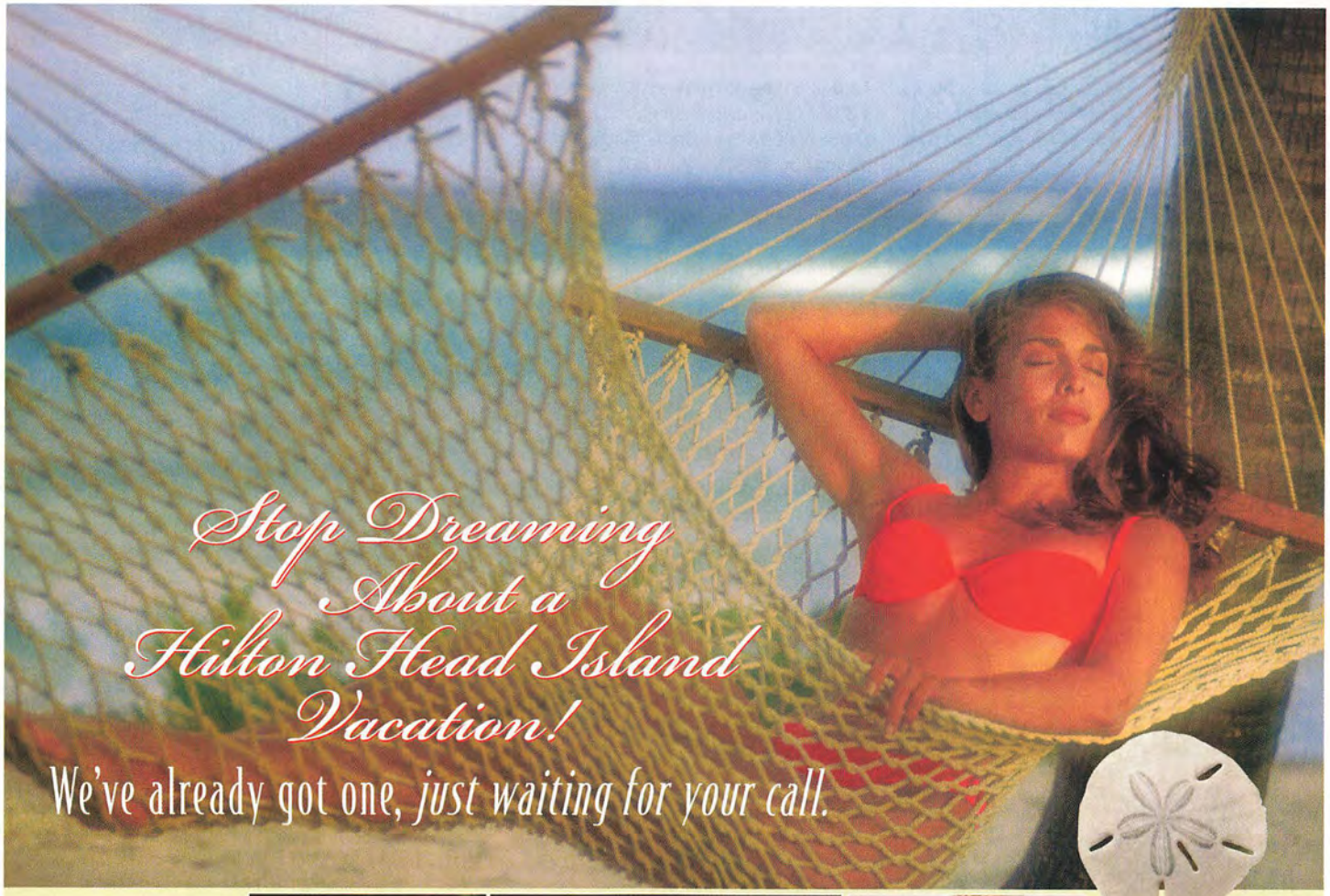
Travis Robinson, a 5-10, 180-pound sophomore, would likely have been listed behind Ramzee Robinson, but Travis also missed spring work recuperating from injury. In addition to Castille, Chris Rogers, a 6-1, 178-pound redshirt freshman who was impressive in fall camp last year, will contend for playing time. Our first guess on the positions of signees puts Jake Jones (6-1, 180) and Marcus Udell (5-11, 180) at left cornerback.

Castille, a 6-1, 188-pound junior, was listed second team through most of the spring, but that may have stemmed from his coaches being disappointed in him at the end of the 2005 season. Castille failed to pass enough fall work to be eligible for post-season play and was unable to play in the Cotton Bowl win over Texas Tech. It is hard to believe that Castille won't be in the starting lineup against Hawaii. Although he is an aggressive player who has been burned on occasion, he has big play potential. The past



Jeremy Clark (99) anchors the inside of the defensive line.

Photo: University of Alabama



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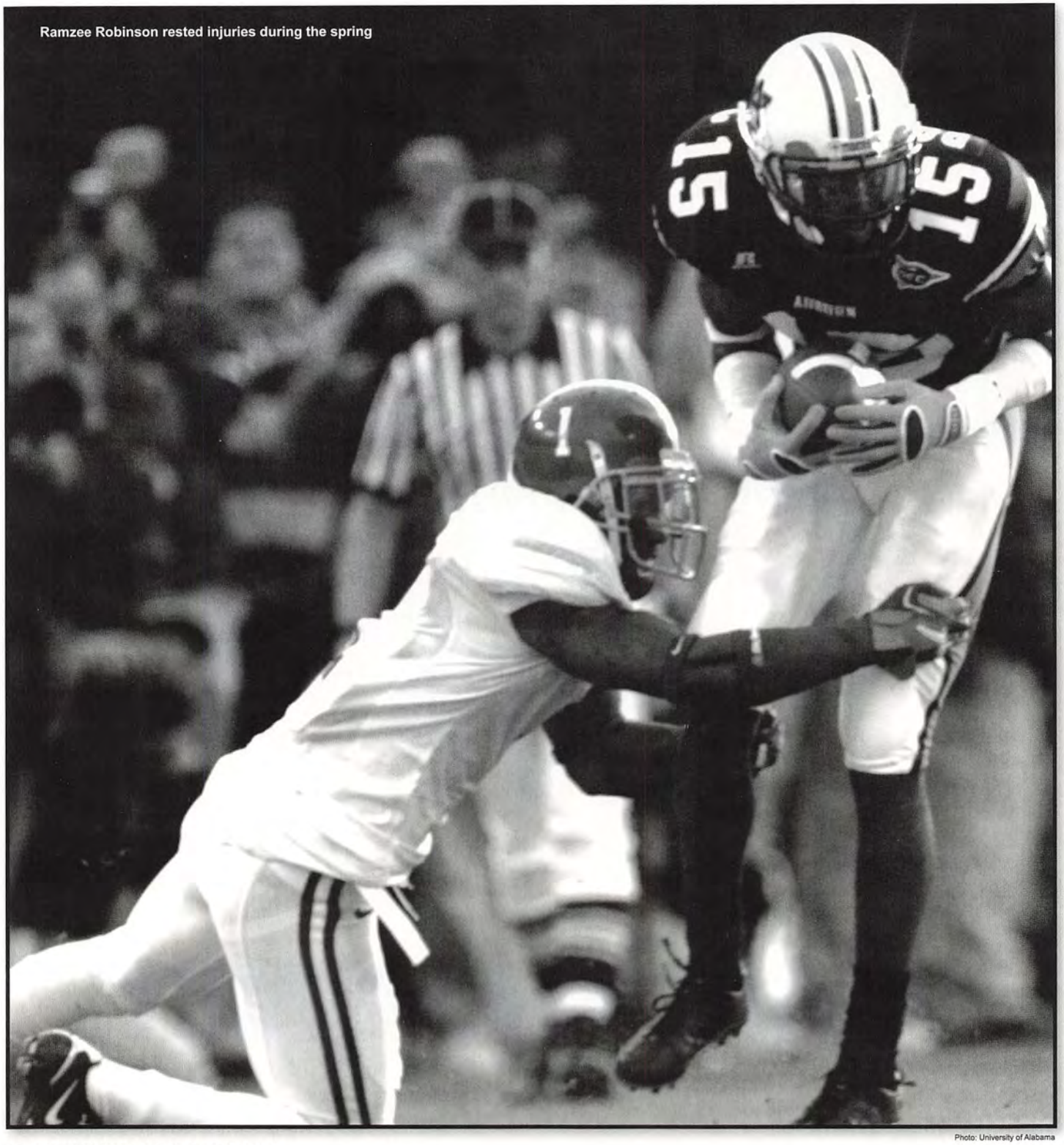
two years he has played a lot as a nickel back. Last year he made 28 tackles, including four for loss, and had two sacks. He also had two interceptions, seven pass break-ups, two forced fumbles, and blocked a punt.

Eric Gray (5-11, 188) has been lauded by coaches for his practice play since arriving at Bama in 2003. After being redshirted his first year he has played primarily on special teams. As a junior he should get playing time–perhaps starting opportunities–at right cornerback.

Sophomore Lionel Mitchell (6-2, 180) played about half the year in 2005 before missing work with a head injury. He was back and ready to go in the spring. Tremayne Coger (5-10, 176) and Marquis Johnson (6-1, 175) are incoming freshmen who project at right cornerback.

SAFETY

The Alabama defense puts a lot of pressure on the safeties. Not only is the defense designed for them to make a lot of tackles (last year safety Roman Harper ranked second on the team with 69 and strong safety Charlie Peprah was sixth with 43), the safeties are responsible for calling defensive signals. Having two new safeties is cause for concern.



Ramzee Robinson rested injuries during the spring

Photo: University of Alabama

Jeffrey Dukes (6-3, 205) had seen some back-up duty the past couple of years, but the senior got a real chance in the Cotton Bowl. With Castille out, Dukes was picked for the important nickel back position, starting and playing the entire game as Bama went with nickel and dime packages against the high octane Texas Tech offense. He played 72 plays, which was every defensive down as well as kicking situations.

It was no surprise that Dukes started out number one at strong safety in the spring. He also finished number one and should be the starter in the season-opener.

Rashad Johnson came to Alabama as a walk-on running back. Anyone who has been watching Bama football the past couple of years has seen a lot of Johnson, but not as a runner. The 5-11, 178-pound sophomore was a terror on special teams as a coverage man. He had eight tackles on the year and caused a fumble against Auburn. Bama elected to move that headhunter ability to defense and he is working at strong safety. Grayshirt Travis Sikes (6-4, 195) also worked at strong safety.

Last fall Cory Reamer saw some playing time as a true freshman, but he was lost for the year with a knee injury. The 6-3, 198-pound sophomore got a little work late in the spring and should be back in contention at strong safety this fall. If he doesn't go the baseball route, signee Justin Woodall (6-1, 200) could get work at strong safety.

In almost any year but last year, Roman Harper would have been the Alabama defensive captain. But last year he had to compete with the incomparable DeMeco Ryans. Still, Harper's loss at safety is a big one. And it wasn't really filled in the spring.

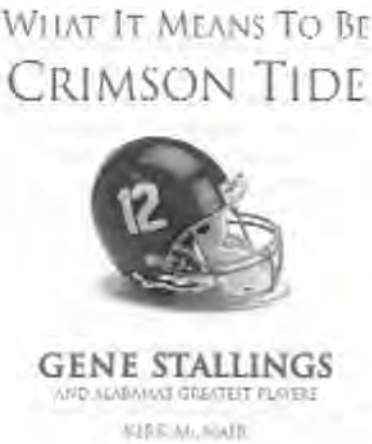
Marcus Carter, a 6-1, 200-pound junior, was the best of the bunch in spring practice, but that doesn't mean he was up to Harper standards. Carter was highly-regarded as a prospect, but his first two seasons with the Tide have been a little disappointing. Most of his playing time has come on special teams and he has only four career tackles. He'll be expected to have at least that many per game if he wins the starting job at safety in the fall.

Although Carter is basically a rookie in the secondary, he is a seasoned veteran compared to the competition. Bryan Kilpatrick has been a good practice player in the secondary, but the 6-4, 197-pound senior has been in only a handful of games since arriving at Bama in 2002. Kilpatrick is a very intelligent player with sound skills and could end up with a lot of playing time in his final season. Sam Burnthall, a 6-2, 190-pound grayshirt freshman who began practicing with the Tide last December, didn't make a noticeable move on the depth chart in the spring, but he seemed to make good progress. He has a nose for the football and the ability to get to it. He had an interception in the A-Day Game. We project Andy Davis, a 6-0, 200-pound incoming freshman, to work at safety. ■

What It Means To Be Crimson Tide

Gene Stallings and Alabama's Greatest Players

Alabama football means championships and All-Americans and, for many, memories of a man in a houndstooth hat. Some 60 former Alabama players who performed in Crimson and White over a 75-year period tell us What it means to be Crimson Tide, and many remember Paul "Bear" Bryant. His time as a Bama player, assistant coach, and 25 years as head coach is a major part of Alabama football, but not the only great era. There have also been national championships won under Wallace Wade and Frank Thomas and Gene Stallings. And part of What it means to be Crimson Tide is former Alabama players' expectations of more national titles.



The last coach to lead Alabama to the national championship is Gene Stallings, who played and coached for Coach Bryant before becoming a Hall of Fame caliber coach himself.

Not only have the coaches been legendary but that stellar tradition has spawned players enshrined in the College Football Hall of Fame and the NFL's Pro Football Hall of Fame. Now, Gene Stallings and 'Bama Editor Kirk McNair have collaborated to bring together many of the greatest players ever to wear the Crimson and White to share their memories in What it Means to be Crimson Tide-Gene Stallings and Alabama's greatest players.

Among those sharing their memories are: from the '40s and '50s, Harry Gilmer and Bart Starr; from the '60s and '70s, Lee Roy Jordan, Joe Namath, Ray Perkins, Ken Stabler, Johnny Musso, John Hannah, and Ozzie Newsome; from the '80s and '90s, Mike Shula and Jay Barker. And many more, including those from the new millennium.

Gene Stallings reveals much of his philosophy and also tells the story of how he did *not* become Alabama's head football coach in 1983. Kirk McNair introduces the players.

What it Means to be Crimson Tide-Gene Stallings and Alabama's greatest players is now available. The hardcover book is more than 300 pages in an oversized format with archival photographs throughout. To order your copy ($27.95 plus tax, shipping and handling) call 1-205-345-5074. You may request a personalized autograph from Kirk McNair.

By Thomas Murphy

Exposure Makes A Difference For Terrence Jones

In case you haven't read up much on linebacker Terrence Jones since he came to the Alabama campus weighing all of 205 pounds in the summer of 2003, here's a newsflash: he's a lot bigger and he has a lot of muscles.

One more thing: he might be the hungriest player on the Crimson Tide roster this fall after waiting patiently behind DeMeco Ryans for substantial playing time the last three years.

"This is all I've been waiting for," said Jones, who tops Alabama's depth chart at strongside linebacker this summer. "It's my turn to go out and do something and I'm anxious. It seems like just yesterday I got here, but my senior year is here now. It's all happened so fast."

Alabama Defensive Coordinator Joe Kines and the veteran Crimson Tide defenders will fill your ear up about how good Jones is. It's just that the 6-1 220-pounder has hardly gotten a chance.

"Terrence has always been good," proclaimed senior linebacker Juwan Simpson. "He's been good whether he's a backup or if someone got hurt and he started. It's just that now he's in a starting role, he's been getting more exposure."

Kines, who coaches Bama linebackers, said at the conclusion of spring practice that he had seen Jones grow more in 30 days than he had in his first three years in the program.

"I don't know what it is about that dynamic," Kines said. "When all of a sudden it's you, you take on a whole different personna.

"Terrence has always been a good player, he's just been behind DeMeco. Off the field, he's a better student. He's just better right now than he was a month ago. That's a credit to him. He's got to grow. He's got to make a play for us next year."

Jones, a 300-tackle performer at Tuscaloosa County High School, kind of digs the idea of how his name could be unleashed on unsuspecting SEC football fans this fall.

"I think that'll probably be the most enjoyable thing," Jones said. "People don't know me, so if I'm able to go out and do my best next year, they'll be like, 'Wow! Where did this kid come from?' I'm kind of looking forward to that aspect of it."

Jones has come a long way from the undersized freshman who was pressed into service due to an injury against Arkansas, and, outweighed by about 100 pounds, was pushed out of the way by the Hogs' power running game.

"He's grown up so much," Kines said. "We couldn't be more proud of anyone than we are of Terrence.

"The best thing he's doing is he's taking ownership of stuff. Academically, he's fighting. He's got a chance to graduate if he has a great semester. We're pulling for him every day. We want that young-un to leave here with a degree."

While Jones played in the background with linebacker stars like Ryans, Cornelius Wortham, Freddie Roach and Derrick Pope on the team, he hasn't been completely invisible. In fact, Jones has posted double-figure tackles each of his seasons, which included 11 his first year on the team. Jones was the only true freshman to play in all 13 games that season.

He posted 18 tackles, including one tackle for a loss, on Alabama's 6-6 team in 2004. Last year, despite missing three games with a high ankle sprain, he registered 21 tackles, four for losses, plus 1 1/2 quarterback sacks.

In the spring, he exhibited leadership skills and a solid grasp of what it meant to be a starter.

"People are actually seeing what he can do, and he's doing a heck of a job," Simpson said at the end of spring drills.

Jones credits the years of learning behind Ryans with helping him prepare for his newest task.

"Just watching him do his job and trying to imitate what he did and just learning from him has helped me," Jones said. "He never made many mistakes. If I picked up good habits from him, I should be fine."

Now that a starting job is within his grasp, Jones hears about it everywhere he goes around town: from the classroom to stores to the barber shop.

"Every Friday at the barber shop, that's all they want to talk about," Jones said, explaining he has a weekly trim to keep his bald spot from showing up.

To those Alabama fans who are cringing in expectation of a defensive dropoff after losing seven seniors from the nation's number two defensive unit, Jones has a parting message.

"We all feel confident we're going to get the job done," he said. "Tell the fans they don't have anything to worry about. The job will get done one way or the other." ■

Terrence Jones (55) will be a key to Bama's defensive success.

Photo: University of Alabama

Christensen is back, but almost every other kicking teams spot to be replaced

Special Teams

In almost every analysis of a football team (including the annual preview of Alabama in the 'BAMA Football Yearbook), there are looks at the offense and defense before getting to the special teams, or kicking teams. It is true that in recent years the role of offense has expanded greatly in importance. Decades ago any fan worth his salt would gravely quote any coach worth his salt as saying that defense and kicking were the most important elements for football success.

That may or may not be true today. But what continues to be true is that a sound kicking game almost without exception is necessary for football success.

This year's Alabama football team has one of the key elements in place. Jamie Christensen's game-winning kick in the Cotton Bowl may not have been a thing of beauty, but like more traditional-looking kicks against Mississippi and Tennessee it was clutch and necessary to success.

Christensen is one of few returning characters in the cast of kicking game specialists. Alabama must replace its snapper, holder and punter, and fill a void that has existed at the punt return position since Tyrone Prothro went out of the lineup with an injury midway through 2005.

Snapper, holder, punter, and return men.

Historically, a football team waits until all hands are on board in fall camp to finalize all aspects of special teams. Incoming players often get their first taste of college football as members of the kickoff coverage and/or return teams, the punt coverage/protect team, and/or the punt rush/return team, and/or the field goal/extra point kick and/or rush team. That's a lot of teams, and there is a lot of overlap on the players who man them.

Here is a look at special teams personnel.

PLACEKICKER

In 2005, Jamie Christensen became quite accustomed to popular acclaim. He was carried off the field after his game-winning 31-yard field goal against Ole Miss last year, given a standing ovation by his classmates on Monday after his 34-yard kick that beat Tennessee, and mobbed by teammates after a 45-yarder in the closing seconds of the Cotton Bowl that nearly scraped both the crossbar and left upright en route to Bama's 13-10 win over Texas Tech.

This is the same man, after all, who brought a Bryant-Denny Stadium crowd to its feet in his debut as a freshman, sailing the opening kickoff out the back of the end zone for one of five touchbacks in the 2004 season opener.

For each of the clutch kicks a year ago, there was a missed kick earlier in each game. And, in the solitude of spring, it would appear Christensen got even better. A rising junior, Christensen hit 64 per cent of his field goals (16 of 25) last season–the exact same number posted by Brian Bostick in 2003 when potential game-winning kicks against Arkansas and Tennessee were missed. Christensen hit 25 of 26 extra point attempts.

Mike Shula called Christensen the most valuable player in two different scrimmages. In live kicking during spring scrimmages, Christensen was 10 of 12 on field goals, and five of the made field goals were from 40 yards or more.

For a rookie kicking on the practice field or in a near-empty Bryant-Denny Stadium, those stats might not carry much weight. For a pressure-tested veteran, they are eye-popping. Christensen's long kick in the spring was 50 yards. He missed a 48-yard attempt into the wind and had the other missed kick blocked.

Christensen will maintain placekicking and kickoff duties in 2006. Behind him are redshirt freshman Andrew Friedman along with walk-ons Leigh Tiffin (son of All-America kicker Van Tiffin) and Adam Hill. A host of kickers will try to make the practice squad when the roster expands on August 23.

Christensen should prove to be a great strength of the special teams both in placement kicks and kickoffs. In 50 kickoffs last year,

2006 Special Teams Depth Chart

Kickoffs (Christensen was solid past two years)
Jamie Christensen, Adam Hill
Field Goals, Extra Points (Christensen excellent in spring)
Jamie Christensen, Andrew Friedman, Leigh Tiffin
Punter (Replacement for Schatz still being sought)
P.J. Fitzgerald, Justin Martin, Patrick Eades, Adam Hill
Kick Returns (New men must be found for punts and kickoffs)
D.J. Hall, Matt Caddell, Simeon Castille, Roy Upchurch, Glen Coffee
Snapper (Spalding was leading spring candidate)
Luke Spalding, Brian Selman
Holder (It helps with numbers to not have a specialist holder)
P.J. Fitzgerald

Jamie Christensen had three game-winning kicks in 2005

Photo: University of Alabama

Christensen had 14 touchbacks and only two kicks out of bounds. His average kickoff landed around the five yard line.

LONG SNAPPER

Christensen will be working with a new snap-hold team, however. Drew Lane and Matt Miller handled those duties expertly a year ago, and must be replaced. Lane might be the least-recognized big loss at any position on the field. He never had a blown snap at Alabama. In fact, he's only had one in his lifetime. He snapped for two years and was a quiet cog for the Tide special teams.

Senior-to-be Luke Spalding was thought of as a reliable backup last year, although he never had the opportunity to demonstrate in a game. He was solid in all the long-snapping chores throughout the spring, however, and has the full confidence of the coaching staff. His backup is a freshman from Vestavia Hills Brian Selman, a capable but little-known quantity.

HOLDER

There are two schools of thought on selecting a holder. One prefers a skill player with good hands and ability to scramble and/or throw in a tight spot or fake situation, while another would choose a specialist who can devote more significant practice time and attention to working in concert with the kicker and snapper.

Alabama has done both in the past three season, using reserve split end (a converted quarterback) Matt Miller last year, and settling on back-up kicker Alex Fox for the holding chore in previous years. More importantly than the origins of the holder, however, are his confidence and consistency. Mike Shula and Special Teams Coordinator Dave Ungerer once experimented with Tyrone Prothro holding for kicks. Although intriguing, the experiment languished due to a lack of execution in the routine.

Punter P.J. Fitzgerald was the full-time holder for Christensen in the fall. Evidenced by Christensen's success, Fitzgerald was serviceable at the job. Keith Brown has also been given a look at holder in the past, and other specialists could perform the task if Fitzgerald was unavailable.

With travel squads limited in Southeastern Conference play, a bit of thought can be given to having the holder have at least some other role on the team.

PUNTER

P.J. Fitzgerald's primary role will be as the Crimson Tide's punter. The coaches considered taking the redshirt off of Fitzgerald last season and giving him an opportunity to challenge Jeremy Schatz, who averaged 38 yards per kick. But despite a stronger leg, Fitzgerald was more erratic and had a slower catch-to-kick time than Schatz. Fitzgerald has worked on both those things in the spring, with Coach Joe Kines constantly peering over his shoulder with a stopwatch in hand. There is a reasonable expectation that Alabama's punting situation will improve with Fitzgerald, but the freshman must prove his ability on the field.

Primary competition in the spring came from freshman Justin Martin, from Thomson, Georgia. Decisions on who will hold the specialist positions have typically been reserved for late August, so Martin has an opportunity to move up then. Other punters in the spring were Patrick Eades and Heath Thomas. Eades was a member of the squad in 2003 and 2004, but an auto accident in the spring of 2004 shattered his hip and sidelined him for a year. He was

limited in his return in the spring.

Eades was brought out to punt in the final week of spring training, and he showed a strong but inconsistent leg. Thomas, who punts and kicks, is a Montgomery native who attended the Air Force Academy. Ungerer called Thomas "a big kid who has a strong leg."

Hill will be among the group of newcomers trying out as punter.

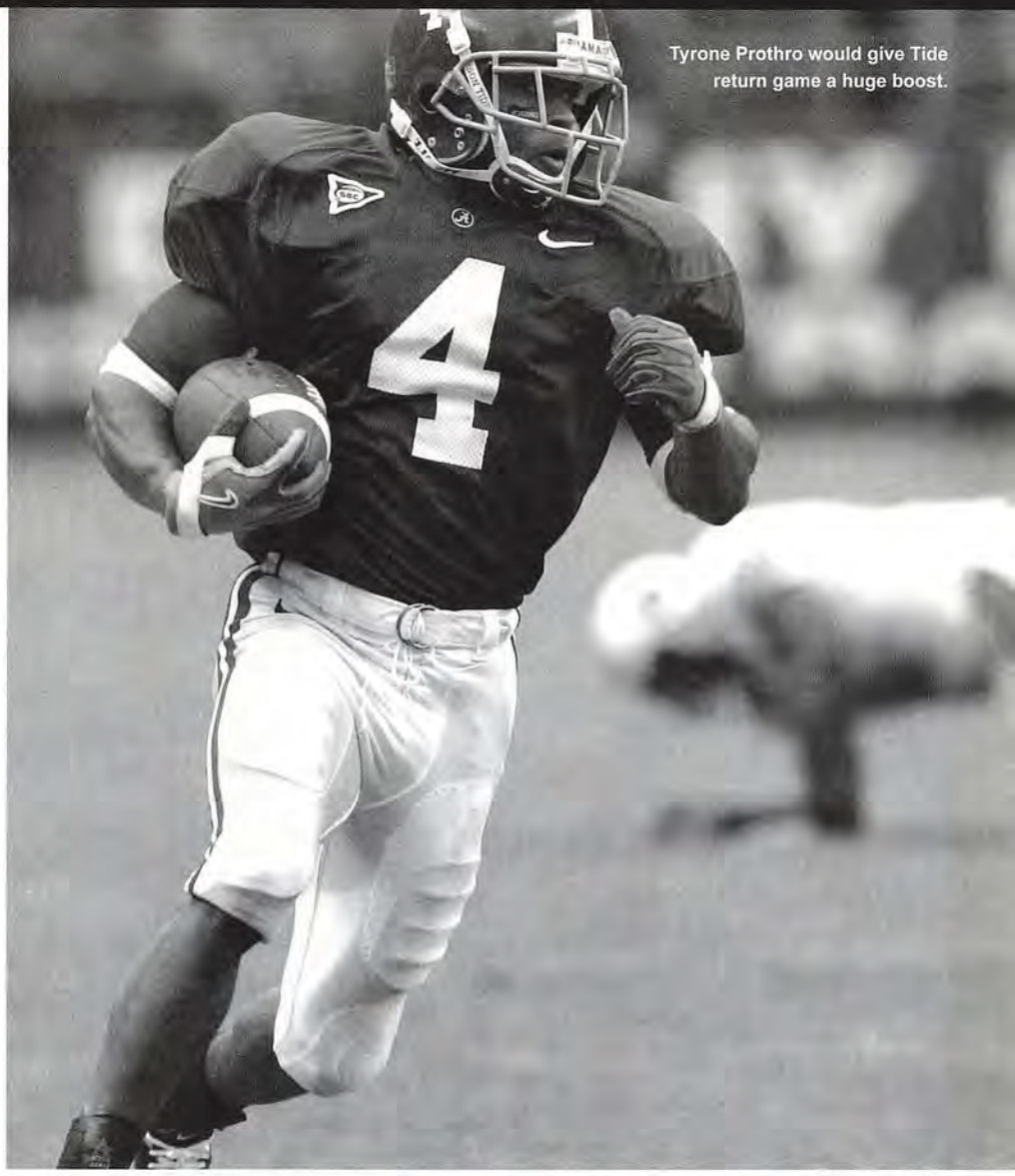
RETURNS

Punt returner has to be one of the most gut-wrenching positions to fill for Shula and Ungerer. Alabama has had only two consistently capable punt returners in the past three years–Shaud Williams and Tyrone Prothro. While everyone is hopeful for a Prothro return, there is no one assuming a seamless comeback. D.J. Hall was the first to replace Prothro after his injury, but he relinquished those duties after a couple of muffs.

No one inspired superior confidence in punt-catching ability throughout the duration of the spring, although several players took punts during spring training or on the field after the formal part of practice had ended. Hall, Simeon Castille, Matt Caddell, and Rashad Johnson all worked at the spot for most of the spring. It was Ramzee Robinson, however, who took some punts in the final week of spring drills, and looked as smooth as anyone.

The job for punt returns will be open in the fall, and Shula might give an opportunity to incoming freshman Javier Arenas in order to improve on the 7.2 yards per punt return average of a year ago. Arenas was a late signee for the Crimson Tide recruiting class, and was most memorable for some electric highlight videos coming on kick and punt returns.

Glen Coffee picked up some experience as a kick returner last year, but in the spring he was out with a groin injury. Kenneth Darby fielded some kickoffs in spring drills, and Hall, who returned kicks last year, was also back deep. Alabama was solid in returning kickoffs a year ago, ranking 24th in the nation and fourth in the SEC. Prothro provided almost half of the Tide's 400 return yards on a third of the return attempts.



Tyrone Prothro would give Tide return game a huge boost.

Photo: University of Alabama

COVERAGE

Alabama's coverage of kickoffs and punts was excellent in 2005, holding opponents to 18.6 and 8 yards per return in the respective categories. The coverage teams were led downfield more times than not by walk-on Rashad Johnson. Johnson expects more playing time at safety in2006, but he will continue to have a major role in coverage.

Ungerer will be looking for the next Rashad Johnson in the fall. "We got a lot of good work on team stuff during spring, but we will be observing kids in the off-season and see how they work," he said. "We have a group of young linebackers who have to be key guys for us in coverage."

Those include Marcel Stamps, Eryk Anders and Zach Schreiber, who are expected to have a major role in coverage. Ezekial Knight has also been a big part of coverage teams over the past two years, and that will likely continue, even though he has moved to defensive end. No one will forget the site of 6-4, 225-pound running back Jimmy Johns racing downfield on kickoffs, particularly when he caused a fumble that led directly to a touchdown against Mississippi State. With a full stable of running backs, Johns could remain on the kickoff team as a way to get on the field as much as possible. Walk-on tailback Theo Townsend is another experienced coverage man who will be called upon to lead the chase downfield in the fall. ■

By Thomas Murphy

P.J. Fitzgerald has athleticism needed by punter

As The University of Alabama football team looks to upgrade from a net punting total of 34.1 yards that ranked among the lowest in Division I-A football last year, P.J. Fitzgerald has emerged under that microscope that all contributing members of Crimson Tide football must understand.

Fitzgerald didn't launch any of the punts that led to that subpar net punting average–those belonged to Jeremy Schatz and Jeffrey Aul–but he's the redshirt freshman who is expected to take over the duties in the fall.

"I feel like I can be there, but right now I don't think I'm there," Fitzgerald said. "I'm capable of it. I'm going to work as hard as I can in the offseason to get there."

Fitzgerald, listed at 6-0, 190 pounds, is not an imposing specimen like Bo Freelend was a couple of years back.

But the Coral Gables, Florida, native has better than average athleticism for a punter. (And don't underestimate the athleticism needed for a punter. He has a tough snap to catch, must act quickly to get the punt away, and in the event of a snap that gets away, must be able to make the best of a bad situation.) Fitzgerald played quarterback his senior season at Stoneman Douglas High, and was a receiver and a wingback prior to that. He was called up to his varsity team as a sophomore in high school to do the punting.

Fitzgerald enters the fall as the top punter.

Photo: Mitch Dobbs

"I've punted basically my whole life," Fitzgerald said. "My senior year I averaged about 40 yards a punt."

Fitzgerald didn't have an array of offers coming out of high school. But Alabama Assistant Coach and Special Teams Coordinator Dave Ungerer saw him at a high school combine last spring and liked what he saw.

"He's got a lot of athleticism, and he has a very explosive leg," Ungerer said. "He also has the ability to get a lot of hang time on the ball."

Alabama offered preferred walk-on status to Fitzgerald last summer, and he accepted that offer over a similar one from Central Florida.

"I felt this was the best opportunity," Fitzgerald said. "I felt I needed a change in my life. I heard so many good things about the tradition at Alabama and it has a great business program."

Fitzgerald was appointed scout team punter last year and performed well enough to garner some mentions by Tide Coach Mike Shula in various post-practice interview sessions.

"I got used to the drills, used to waking up at 5:30 for the early workouts," Fitzgerald said.

He also showed a heady nature in that spotlight 12 to 15 yards behind the deep snapper.

"He showed he can make adjustments back there," Ungerer said. "He can handle the pressure pretty well. He showed me he has a lot of composure. We get after the scout team punter pretty good and he handled it well."

With his name atop the depth chart this spring, Fitzgerald didn't come out blasting 45-yarders with great consistency.

"I shanked a couple there in the beginning," he said. "But my last three (workouts) coming off spring break was my best week overall. I felt good. Hopefully that'll rebound into the fall practice and into the season."

Fitzgerald's offseason mantra is one that will be repeated by first-time punter candidates across the nation this summer: aim for consistency.

"That's the name of the kicking game right there–consistency," Fitzgerald said. "Just seeing my kicks over and over again. Don't cross over as much and just come straight up through the ball."

Ungerer described Fitzgerald's spring workouts as the best out of the group of punters.

"His consistency is not quite there yet," Ungerer said. "He's a guy who needs some game reps. He would be our top guy going into the season." ■

By Erik Stinnett

The 2006 Crimson Tide

J.P. Adams

Eryk Anders

Jimmy Barnes

Justin Britt

Keith Brown

Sam Burnthall

Matt Caddell

Antoine Caldwell

67 J.P. Adams
Senior • Nose Tackle • 6-3, 288
Northport • Tuscaloosa County
As a junior last season, J.P. Adams saw action in 10 of the Tide's 12 games, tallying nine tackles with one pass break-up and one quarterback pressure. Those stats figure to go up this fall. The Northport native, one of the pleasant surprises of the spring with his improved play, will likely continue in a reserve role in 2006 behind expected starter Dominic Lee but still should see his share of playing time.

51 Eryk Anders
Freshman • Linebacker • 6-2, 220
San Antonio, Texas • Smithson Valley
Eryk Anders stirred up plenty of curiosity during fall camp last year after joining the team as a mid-summer scholarship recipient. He ended up redshirting last season, but fans will likely get the chance to see him in action this fall. The former prep defensive lineman will provide depth at the strongside linebacker position behind Terrence Jones and Zach Schreiber and may participate on special teams.

15 Jimmy Barnes
Freshman • Quarterback • 6-5, 229
Los Alamitos, Calf. • Los Alamitos
Barnes enters the 2006 season as the Tide's number three quarterback behind John Parker Wilson and Marc Guillon, which means the California native's main role this fall likely will involve holding the clipboard and flashing in signals. But that doesn't mean Barnes isn't progressing. In fact, Barnes, who spent his redshirt season last fall running the scout team offense, impressed coaches enough in the spring to win the Bart Starr Most Improved Quarterback Award. In the A-Day Game, with Guillon sidelined with a knee injury, Barnes completed 12-of-22 passes for 95 yards. He threw two interceptions. For all five spring scrimmages, Barnes was 21-of-42 for 266 yards, two touchdowns and two interceptions.

50 Justin Britt
Junior • Left Guard • 6-4, 294
Cullman • Cullman
After two seasons as a reserve defensive tackle, Justin Britt was moved to the offensive side of the football in the spring. He's expected to be behind B.J. Stabler at right guard, but could challenge Marlon Davis and Justin Moon at left guard. Although he was limited in the spring because of shoulder surgery in late 2005, Britt is expected to be fully recovered for the 2006 season. Britt's older brothers, Wesley and Taylor, also played offensive line for Alabama.

81 Keith Brown
Junior • Split End • 6-3, 192
Pensacola, Fla. • Pensacola
Keith Brown enters the 2006 season as the Tide's starting split end and one of its top legitimate game-breakers. Blessed with deceptive speed, the Floridian has a knack for turning short completions into long touchdown runs. Last year, he had a 46-yard catch-and-run score against South Carolina, a 65-yard catch-and-run score against Florida and a 76-yard catch-and-run score against Texas Tech. An infected toe limited Brown in the spring and kept him out of the A-Day Game. In the two scrimmages he did participate in, he totaled seven catches for 101 yards.

43 Sam Burnthall
Freshman • Free Safety • 6-3, 195
Decatur • Decatur
A 2005 signee, Sam Burnthall grayshirted last fall and then joined the team in the spring. He showed good instincts in practice as evidenced by his interception in the A-Day Game, but is behind both Marcus Carter and Bryan Kilpatrick at safety heading into the fall.

11 Matt Caddell
Junior • Split End • 6-0, 181
McCalla • McAdory
Matt Caddell, one of the Tide's three most experienced receivers, starts the 2006 campaign as the number two split end behind Keith Brown. Last year, Caddell saw action in every game, including starting both the first and last games. Filling in for the suspended D.J. Hall in the Cotton Bowl, Caddell had his best game of the season, catching three passes for 63 yards. In the spring, Caddell caught 12 passes for 133 yards in five scrimmages, helping him earn the Ray Perkins Most Improved Receiver Award.

59 Antoine Caldwell
Sophomore • Center • 6-3, 296
Montgomery • Lee
After starring at guard for most of the 2005 season, Antoine Caldwell moved to center

Chris Capps

Evan Cardwell

Marcus Carter

Simeon Castille

Tim Castille

Jamie Christensen

Jeremy Clark

Glen Coffee

for the Cotton Bowl and turned in a stellar performance. The Montgomery native, who honed his shotgun formation snapping skills in the spring, will remain at center this fall and is considered an all-star candidate. Last year, Caldwell collected numerous honors, including being named Freshman All-SEC. In the spring A-Day Game, Caldwell earned the Dwight Stephenson Most Valuable Lineman Award.

72 Chris Capps
Junior • Left Tackle • 6-6, 296
Jonesboro, Ga. • Landmark Christian

Left tackle, one of the most important spots on the offensive line because of its responsibility of protecting the quarterback's blind side, was at times a problem area for the Tide in 2005. Chris Capps hopes to bolster that position this season and enters fall camp as the projected starter. He started all 12 games in 2005 and ended the season with a solid performance in the Cotton Bowl.

70 Evan Cardwell
Freshman • Center • 6-3, 290
Killen • Brooks

Evan Cardwell is the Tide's number two center entering fall camp–and a very highly regarded number two at that. After redshirting as a true freshman last year, Cardwell turned in an impressive spring and should serve as a more-than-adequate back-up for starter Antoine Caldwell.

20 Marcus Carter
Junior • Safety • 6-1, 200
Fort Payne • Fort Payne

Although his career thus far has been relatively void of highlights, Marcus Carter showed during the spring he's got highlight potential. He enters fall camp as the projected new starter at safety–the position manned the last few years by the graduated Roman Harper. In his role as a back-up safety and special teams player the past two years, Carter logged a total of four tackles. In this year's A-Day Game alone, Carter collected five tackles. Not surprisingly, the Fort Payne native was awarded the Bobby Johns Most Improved Defensive Back Award.

2 Simeon Castille
Junior • Right Cornerback • 6-1, 188
Birmingham • Briarwood Christian

Simeon Castille, one of the finest all-around athletes on the team, is expected to rise to the number one right cornerback position by the time the 2006 season kicks off, replacing the graduated Anthony Madison. Castille saw extensive action in 11 of the Tide's 12 games last year, missing the Cotton Bowl due to academic ineligibility. He recorded 28 tackles–including four for loss–two sacks, two interceptions, nine pass break-ups, two caused fumbles and one punt block. He continued to impress in the spring, including tying linebacker Juwan Simpson with a game-high eight tackles in the A-Day Game. Castille's stiffest challenge for the starting right cornerback job will come from fellow junior Eric Gray. Castille showed last year he can return punts, too, and is a candidate for that duty again this fall.

19 Tim Castille
Senior • Fullback • 5-11, 236
Birmingham • Briarwood Christian

A serious knee injury in 2004 reduced some of Tim Castille's quickness, cutting ability and explosiveness in 2005, but coaches were able to utilize the former prep running back in short-yardage situations and did so with much success. Castille, a heavy load to bring down at 236 pounds, assumed the role of Mr. Touchdown, leading the Tide with seven trips into the end zone. One of the surprises in the spring was Castille displaying more of his pre-knee injury form as far as his running ability, which, obviously, bodes well for the senior this fall. Castille, who won the Sylvester Croom Commitment to Excellence Award, carried three times for 18 yards and caught nine passes for 67 yards in spring scrimmage action.

86 Jamie Christensen
Junior • Placekicker • 6-0, 178
Norcross, Ga. • Naval Prep

They call him Money–and with good reason. Jamie Christensen calmly kicked not one, not two, but three last-minute, game-winning field goals for the Tide in 2005. Never mind that the third one, against Texas Tech, had the trajectory of a mortally wounded duck. If there was a knock against the nerves-of-steel Norcross native last year it was his inconsistency when the game wasn't in its final moments. He finished the season 16-of-25 on field-goal attempts. But if the spring is any indication, Christensen appears to have shored up that weakness, setting up what could be an All-SEC caliber season this year. After one of his strong showings in the spring, Coach Mike Shula deemed Christensen the "MVP on offense." In the A-Day Game, Christensen was 3-of-3 on field goal attempts, connecting from 43, 46 and 51 yards.

99 Jeremy Clark
Senior • Defensive Tackle • 6-3, 305
Daphne • Daphne

One of two returning starters on the defensive line and one of the defense's steadiest performers in recent years, Jeremy Clark is expected to be one of the unit's leaders in his senior campaign this fall. The Daphne product has recorded at least 18 tackles every season since 2003 and collected two sacks as a freshman and two more as a junior last year.

38 Glen Coffee
Sophomore • Running Back • 6-1, 207
Fort Walton, Fla. • Fort Walton Beach

Glen Coffee enters fall camp with questions

Mark Collins

Kenneth Darby

Trent Davidson

Cody Davis

Drew Davis

Marlon Davis

Brandon Deaderick

Scott Deaton

regarding both his health and his position on the depth chart and may end up redshirting this season. He was the Tide's number two running back behind Kenneth Darby throughout much of his true freshman season in 2005 and remained number two going into spring drills. A pelvic injury, however, shelved Coffee during the spring, providing more opportunities for Jimmy Johns and Roy Upchurch to impress. And they did. When healthy, the Fort Walton, Fla., native has shown the ability to produce. Last year, Coffee finished with 179 yards rushing on 48 carries. His best game came against South Carolina when he ran 15 times for 75 yards.

56 Matt Collins
Junior • Linebacker • 6-1, 241
Clay • Clay-Chalkville

Matt Collins enters fall camp involved in a spirited battle with freshman Prince Hall for the starting middle linebacker job, vacated by the graduated Freddie Roach. Collins may have a slight edge based merely on his experience. As a freshman in 2004, Collins saw action in every game on special teams, and last season he gained valuable game experience as a back-up linebacker, getting in on 191 snaps and finishing with 13 tackles. He missed the Cotton Bowl with a knee injury but was back on the field in the spring. In this year's A-Day Game, Collins and Hall registered five and six tackles, respectively.

34 Kenneth Darby
Senior • Running Back • 5-11, 220
Huntsville • Butler

Perhaps somewhat quietly, Kenneth Darby has put together one of the finest careers ever by an Alabama running back. In fact, the senior from Huntsville is poised to become the school's all-time leading rusher this fall, breaking current NFL MVP Shaun Alexander's mark of 3,565 yards. Darby needs just 1,080 yards to set the new record. That's not an unreachable mark considering what he's done the past two seasons. In fact, the All-SEC performer is bidding to become the first player in Alabama history to rush for at least 1,000 yards in three-straight seasons. He ran for 1,062 yards as a sophomore and 1,242 yards last season. Last year's feat was made even more remarkable considering the fact Darby suffered a career-threatening pelvic injury in late 2004 and had to go through surgery and a long rehabilitation process. Despite seeing limited action this past spring, Darby accumulated 103 yards rushing on 32 carries in four scrimmages.

74 Trent Davidson
Sophomore • Right Tackle • 6-5, 270
Brewton • T.R. Miller

Trent Davidson is back from foot surgery. He's just not back in the same spot he was at prior to the injury. After playing 193 snaps as a freshman tight end and then redshirting last season while recovering from surgery, Davidson found himself a yard closer to center during spring drills. The former T.R. Miller standout, who now wears number 74, is expected to provide depth at the right tackle position behind Kyle Tatum.

75 Cody Davis
Sophomore • Left Tackle • 6-7, 279
Tuscaloosa • Hillcrest

Off-season shoulder surgery kept Cody Davis out of spring drills, meaning the back-up left tackle will remain in a back-up role to start fall camp. Last year, he was number two at the position behind Chris Capps and participated in 151 snaps on the season. In Davis' absence in the spring, freshman Mike Johnson was able to earn valuable practice time, meaning Davis will have added competition for the number two job this fall.

79 Drew Davis
Freshman • Right Tackle • 6-6, 290
Evergreen • Sparta Academy

Drew Davis enters the 2006 season as a candidate to back up the only senior on the Tide's offensive line–right tackle Kyle Tatum. Davis, whose top competition for the number two position is Trent Davidson, originally signed with the Tide in February 2004, grayshirted in the fall of 2004, joined the Tide in spring of 2005 and redshirted in the fall of 2005.

76 Marlon Davis
Sophomore • Left Guard • 6-4, 315
Columbus, Ga. • Carver

Marlon Davis is penciled in as the Tide's starting left guard this season after turning in a strong spring showing–strong enough, in fact, to earn him the Paul Crane Most Improved Offensive Lineman Award. Last year, as a true freshman, Davis served as the back-up at right guard. He saw action in four games, including a season-high 47 snaps against Middle Tennessee, and even earned a start against Southern Mississippi.

95 Brandon Deaderick
Freshman • Defensive End • 6-4, 230
Elizabethtown, Ky. • Elizabethtown

Brandon Deaderick's time will come. It just may not be this season. The redshirt freshman with the Derrick Thomas physique impressed during the spring when Chris Harris had to sit out because of injury. However, going into the 2006 season, Deaderick is still third in the pecking order behind Harris and starter Wallace Gilberry.

71 Scott Deaton
Freshman • Right Guard • 6-5, 295
Birmingham • Oak Mountain

Scott Deaton begins fall camp as the number two right guard behind established starter B.J. Stabler. Last year, during his redshirt

Will Denniston

Jeffrey Dukes

Brandon Fanney

P.J. Fitzgerald

Andrew Friedman

Wallace Gilberry

Eric Gray

Bobby Greenwood

season, Deaton practiced at right tackle but made the move to right guard in the spring. He is the son of former Tide player Ken Deaton.

91 Will Denniston
Junior • Fullback • 6-3, 221
Mobile • UMS-Wright

Will Denniston joined an already crowded fullback field in the spring after previously working at tight end. Denniston isn't likely to see much playing time this season but will provide depth and may have a better chance of getting on the field in 2007 after LéRon McClain and Tim Castille graduate. The Mobile native did have a good spring, catching six passes for 37 yards in three spring scrimmages.

3 Jeffrey Dukes
Senior • Strong Safety • 6-2, 205
Oxford, Miss. • Northwest Junior College

Jeffrey Dukes will step in as the starting strong safety this season in place of the graduated Charlie Peprah. The good news is that not only does Dukes already have significant game experience under his belt, he's done well when he's been on the field. He played in every game last season, starting as the nickel back and player every down against Texas Tech in the Cotton Bowl, and finished the year with 13 tackles and one interception. He had a career-high four tackles against Florida. Most of his action in 2004 came on special teams.

95 Brandon Fanney
Freshman • Defensive Tackle • 6-5, 270
Morristown, Tenn. • Hargrave Military Academy

Brandon Fanney projects as the Tide's starting nose tackle not this season but in 2007. After redshirting last season, he'll spend this year learning the ropes behind seniors Dominic Lee and J.P. Adams. Fanney showed progress in the spring and registered four unassisted tackles–the most of any defensive lineman–in the A-Day Game. He also had a sack.

11 P.J. Fitzgerald
Freshman • Punter • 6-0, 190
Coral Springs, Fla. • Stoneman Douglas

P.J. Fitzgerald, who redshirted as a true freshman last year, enters fall camp as the leading candidate to replace Jeremy Schatz as the Tide's punter. His competition will include Justin Martin, number two on the depth chart following spring work, as well as other walk-ons who will join the team in August. Fitzgerald also will serve as the holder on extra points and field goals.

15 Andrew Friedman
Freshman • Kicker • 6-2, 215
Fairhope • UMS Wright

Redshirt freshman Andrew Friedman is the Tide's likely number two kicker this fall and will probably have to wait a couple of years before he has a legitimate shot at winning the starting job. Junior Jamie Christensen, last year's starter who's already proven he can deliver in the clutch, is firmly entrenched as the number one guy.

92 Wallace Gilberry
Junior • Left Defensive End • 6-3, 254
Bay Minette • Baldwin County

One of only four returning starters on defense, Wallace Gilberry is back to anchor the left defensive end spot. Gilberry burst on the scene as a back-up freshman two years ago when he recorded six-and-a-half sacks. He started all 12 games last season, but with offenses keying on him, the Bay Minette native's sack total dropped off. He still had a productive year, though, recording 37 tackles and 10 tackles for loss. He had a career-best seven tackles against LSU in 2005. Gilberry had three tackles in this year's A-Day Game.

36 Eric Gray
Junior • Right Cornerback • 5-11, 188
Trinity • West Morgan

Eric Gray worked at the number one right cornerback spot in the spring and–even if he doesn't remain the starter–should see significant playing time this fall. Starting left cornerback Ramzee Robinson, who missed spring drills because of injury, is now healthy, and Simeon Castille, who filled in for Robinson in his absence, is likely to move over into the starting right cornerback spot. Gray, who backed up both Robinson and Anthony Madison last year, played in eight games in 2005, getting in on 115 snaps. He registered six tackles.

93 Bobby Greenwood
Sophomore • Right Defensive End • 6-6, 260
Prattville • Prattville

If Bobby Greenwood's freshman season is any indication, the Prattville product is poised for an excellent career at the Capstone. Playing behind NFL draft choice Mark Anderson, Greenwood played in every game, participating in 157 snaps. He clearly made the most of his game minutes. His stats included 15 tackles, five stops behind the line, five quarterback pressures, one pass break-up and three sacks, the first of which came against Florida. While it may seem a no-brainer that Greenwood would step into a starting role this season, a strong spring showing by Keith Saunders actually has Greenwood slightly behind Saunders going into fall camp. Whoever starts, Greenwood seems certain to see his share of playing time.

Marc Guillon

D.J. Hall

Prince Hall

Chris Harris

Cole Harvey

Charles Hoke

Baron Huber

Jimmy Johns

18 Marc Guillon
Senior • Quarterback • 6-3, 212
Chico, Calif. • Mirmonte

Marc Guillon, the one-time Miami quarterback who transferred to Alabama in 2003, will close out his collegiate career this fall. In all likelihood, it won't be as the Tide's starting quarterback. The Chico, California, native was making solid strides early in the spring, but a late-spring knee injury thwarted Guillon's progress. In the three spring scrimmages he was able to participate in and finish, he completed 15-of-39 passes for 137 yards and two interceptions. Guillon, whose knee sprain didn't require surgery, suffered a post-spring broken right hand. He is expected to be fully recovered for fall camp and will likely serve as John Parker Wilson's back-up. As the third-string signal-caller last year, Guillon attempted just one pass. He completed 20-of-43 passes for 191 yards, one touchdown and three interceptions in 2004 after Brodie Croyle went down.

22 D.J. Hall
Junior • Flanker • 6-3, 190
Fort Walton Beach, Fla. • Choctawhatchee

There's little question two-year starting flanker and all-around athlete D.J. Hall enters the 2006 season as one of the Tide's top offensive threats. A second-team All-SEC performer in 2005, Hall was the team's leading receiver with 48 receptions for 676 yards. He's the only wideout in Bama history to catch at least 10 passes in back-to-back games, reeling in 10 for 139 yards against Tennessee before snagging 11 for 157 yards against Utah State. After sitting out the Cotton Bowl due to suspension, Hall bounced back to have a solid spring, earning the Dixie Howell Memorial Award as the A-Day Game's MVP. In the contest, Hall had seven receptions for 136 yards and two touchdowns–his best scrimmage performance of the spring. His receiving total for all four spring scrimmages was 13 catches for 268 yards and four TDs. Hall put in some duty as a kick and punt returner in 2005 and is a candidate to handle those chores.

21 Prince Hall
Freshman • Linebacker • 6-0, 240
Moreno Valley, Calif. • Moreno Valley

After redshirting last season and dealing with a little homesickness, Prince Hall began displaying in the spring the form that made him such a highly regarded recruit a year earlier. Hall enters fall camp slightly behind junior Matt Collins in the battle for the starting middle linebacker spot. In the spring A-Day Game, Hall and Collins tallied six and five tackles, respectively.

91 Chris Harris
Senior • Left Defensive End • 6-5, 244
Tuscaloosa • Central

Tuscaloosa native Chris Harris enters his senior season as Wallace Gilberry's back-up at left defensive end. Based on his play in the spring A-Day Game, in which he recorded four tackles, two sacks and one pass break-up, Harris could be a very often-used back-up for the Tide in 2006. He participated in every game last year, playing 147 snaps, including a season-high 21 snaps against South Carolina and Florida. His most memorable play came against Florida when he picked off a Chris Leak pass and returned it to the one-yard line, setting up a Tide touchdown.

69 Cole Harvey
Freshman • Tight End • 6-3, 250
Tallahassee, Fla. • Lincoln

Cole Harvey originally signed with the Tide in 2005, grayshirted last fall and then joined the team in the spring. A former prep offensive lineman, the freshman from Florida made the switch to tight end in the spring and came up with one reception in scrimmage play. He's likely to redshirt this season.

89 Charles Hoke
Sophomore • Tight End • 6-6, 240
Birmingham • Briarwood Christian

Charles Hoke heads into fall camp as the Tide's third tight end behind Travis McCall and Nick Walker. As a true freshman last year, Hoke played in seven games, recording a season-high seven snaps in Alabama's win over South Carolina. In the spring, Hoke totaled three catches for 34 yards in scrimmage play.

40 Baron Huber
Freshman • Fullback • 6-4, 240
Knoxville, Tenn. • Powell

Baron Huber may not get a lot of playing time this season, but the Knoxville, Tennessee, native appears to be getting groomed to take over the starting fullback job in 2007. Huber, who will be behind seniors LéRon McClain and Tim Castille, caught three passes for 34 yards during spring scrimmage action. During his redshirt season last year, Huber practiced at linebacker after starring as a defensive end in high school.

10 Jimmy Johns
Sophomore • Running Back • 6-3, 240
Brookhaven, Miss. • Brookhaven

Despite adjusting to college life as well as a new position, true freshman Jimmy Johns used his enormous natural physical ability to turn in some impressive runs for the Tide in 2005. Now that Johns is a sophomore and has a year of experience under his

Mike Johnson

Rashad Johnson

Terrence Jones

Chris Keys

Bryan Kilpatrick

Zeke Knight

Dominic Lee

Justin Martin

belt, the Mississippi native appears poised for a breakout season. He enters fall camp as the Tide's number two running back behind senior Kenneth Darby but Johns' background as a prep quarterback will allow Tide coaches to utilize Johns in a number of ways. Johns played in every game in 2005, finishing as the team's second-leading rusher with 202 yards on 38 carries. In five spring scrimmages, Johns rushed 41 times for 222 yards, caught three passes for 10 yards and threw an interception in his only pass attempt. He earned the Ozzie Newsome Most Improved Freshman Award.

78 Mike Johnson
Freshman • Left Tackle • 6-6, 285
Pensacola, Fla. • Pine Forest
With Cody Davis out with an injury, Mike Johnson took advantage of some unexpected extra practice time in the spring and enters fall camp number two at left tackle behind Chris Capps. He was redshirted last season.

49 Rashad Johnson
Sophomore • Strong Safety • 5-11, 178
Sulligent • Sulligent
Already known as a hard-hitting special teams star, walk-on Rashad Johnson is hoping to also make an impact at strong safety this fall. The Sulligent native, a reserve running back since he arrived at Alabama in 2004, made the switch to strong safety in the spring and enters fall camp number two behind starter Jeffrey Dukes. Playing on special teams in all 12 games last year, Johnson recorded eight tackles and forced a fumble against Auburn. Johnson continued to catch coaches' eyes in the spring, receiving the "Bear" Bryant Best Non-Scholarship Award.

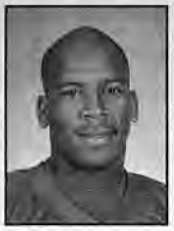
55 Terrence Jones
Senior • Strongside Linebacker • 6-2, 223
Fosters • Tuscaloosa County
Terrence Jones finally has his chance. After backing up All-America linebacker DeMeco Ryans the last few years, the senior from Fosters moves into his first starting role this fall. He does so with plenty of experience under his belt. The seasoned back-up has played in 34 games over the past three years, logging 50 tackles, five tackles for loss, one-and-a-half sacks, one pass break-up and three quarterback pressures. In the spring, Jones had a pair of tackles in the A-Day Game and received the Lee Roy Jordan Headhunter Award.

32 Chris Keys
Sophomore • Weakside Linebacker • 6-2, 205
Stevenson • North Jackson
Chris Keys enters fall camp with a lot of catching up to do. But if there's one player who can make up some ground in a hurry, Keys, one of the more gifted athletes on the team, is that guy. The sophomore missed spring drills with a broken foot, but what made his absence even more costly was the fact that Keys was supposed to be learning a new position in the spring. As a true freshman in 2005, Keys played in 11 games as a reserve strong safety, tallying five tackles and one fumble recovery. Coaches moved Keys to weakside linebacker in the off-season. This season he's expected to battle Demarcus Waldrop and Marcel Stamps for the back-up spot behind starter Juwan Simpson.

30 Bryan Kilpatrick
Senior • Safety • 6-4, 197
Monroeville • Monroe Academy
Bryan Kilpatrick held off a charge from freshman Sam Burnthall in the spring to enter fall camp as the number two safety behind Marcus Carter. Kilpatrick has seen limited action during his career thus far but his two interceptions in this year's A-Day Game certainly didn't hurt his chances for additional playing time this fall.

84 Zeke Knight
Junior • Right Defensive End • 6-3, 217
Wedowee • Randolph County
The spring experiment that drew the most curiosity among Tide fans was the move of Zeke Knight from wide receiver to right defensive end. Good-sized for a receiver but a little undersized as a defensive end, Knight has already begun to bulk up some and hopes to utilize his receiver-caliber speed to become an effective pass rusher. As far as switching to a defensive mentality, that shouldn't be a problem. Knight was a star outside linebacker in high school. As a receiver last year, Knight caught 11 passes for 126 yards and a touchdown but struggled with drops.

96 Dominic Lee
Senior • Nose Tackle • 6-2, 303
Birmingham • Huffman
Dominic Lee, whose once promising career has been beset by injuries, is hoping to stay healthy for his senior campaign–especially now that he's moving into a starting role with the graduation of Rudy Griffin. Based on his performance in the spring, which included a sack in the A-Day Game, the former Huffman star appears ready to assume starter status. In fact, he might be poised for a breakout season. Lee earned the Billy Neighbors Most Improved Defensive Lineman Award for his spring work.


Travis McCall

LéRon McClain

Aaron McDaniel

Lionel Mitchell

Justin Moon

Will Oakley

Tyrone Prothro

Cory Reamer

23 Justin Martin
Freshman • Punter • 5-10, 205
Thomson, Ga. • Thomson

Justin Martin ended spring practice as the number two punter behind P.J. Fitzgerald. Martin, along with Fitzgerald, will likely face additional competition at the position this fall.

83 Travis McCall
Sophomore • Tight End • 6-2, 250
Prattville • Prattville

It looks like the Cotton Bowl was the beginning of something very good for Travis McCall. After seeing reserve duty during the 2005 regular season, McCall, utilized mostly for his blocking skills, got the starting nod for the Cotton Bowl and hasn't looked back since. He held on to the number one spot through the spring and enters fall camp as the projected starter. As a true freshman last year, McCall caught three passes for 22 yards. He had two receptions for 31 yards in the A-Day Game.

33 LéRon McClain
Senior • Fullback • 6-1, 256
Northport • Tuscaloosa County

One of the most complete fullbacks in the SEC, LéRon McClain heads into his final season at The Capstone as the returning starter. The Northport native with the 256-pound package and some of the softest hands on the team can block, run and catch passes–and he can do them all well. Last year, he rushed eight times for 39 yards and caught 18 passes for 140 yards and two touchdowns. In scrimmage action during the spring, McClain ran once for five yards and caught five passes for 28 yards.

25 Aaron McDaniel
Sophomore • Split End • 6-1, 176
Fort Payne • Fort Payne

After practicing as a defensive back the past two seasons, Aaron McDaniel made the move to split end in the spring and enters fall camp number three on the depth chart behind Keith Brown and Matt Caddell. In three spring scrimmages, McDaniel totaled three receptions for 25 yards. The Fort Payne product redshirted in 2004 and did not see varsity action in 2005.

16 Lionel Mitchell
Sophomore • Right Cornerback • 6-2, 180
Stone Mountain, Ga. • Hargrave Military Academy

Lionel Mitchell is looking forward to seeing how much progress he can make with a full season to practice and play. As a freshman last year, Mitchell got off to a good start, seeing action in the Tide's first five games, but a head injury sidelined him for the second half of the season. The son of former NFL standout Stump Mitchell was back on the field in the spring, tallied two tackles and an interception in the A-Day Game, and enters fall camp third on the depth chart at right cornerback behind Simeon Castille and Eric Gray.

73 Justin Moon
Junior • Left Guard • 6-5, 290
Guntersville • Guntersville

Justin Moon hasn't been able to crack the starting line-up thus far in his career, and the junior enters fall camp again as a back-up. He's penciled in as the Tide's number two left guard behind Marlon Davis. Last year, Moon participated in all 12 games, getting in on 100 snaps.

7 Will Oakley
Sophomore • Flanker • 6-1, 188
Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. • Nease

If Alabama had a Worst Luck with Hamstrings Award, Will Oakley would be the hands-down winner. The Floridian has yet to become a consistent threat and contributor on offense because of recurring hamstring pulls. After redshirting in 2004, Oakley suffered a hamstring pull in fall camp and made it in for just 12 snaps last season. He then sat out virtually the entire spring because of another hamstring pull. He enters the 2006 season behind D.J. Hall and Nikita Stover on the depth chart.

4 Tyrone Prothro
Senior • Flanker • 5-8, 178
Heflin • Cleburne County

Perhaps the worst news from the 2005 season was the season-ending injury to the Tide's top playmaker and fan favorite Tyrone Prothro. The David Palmer-esque flanker was on course for an All-America season before suffering a gruesome broken leg against Florida. Still, despite playing in only five games, Prothro made enough of an impact to earn All-SEC honors. He scored three touchdowns and racked up 691 all-purpose yards–325 receiving, 193 returning kicks, 81 returning punts and 41 rushing. And, oh, by the way, he just happened to turn in the college football play of the year and perhaps the most extraordinary catch in Alabama football history when, on a long bomb from Brodie Croyle, he reached around a Southern Mississippi defender and caught the ball against his back. After a pair of surgeries and an ongoing rehabilitation regimen, Number 4 is determined to return to the field. Whether it's this season or the 2007 season remains to be seen. Prothro, who has yet to take a redshirt season during his career, has one season of eligibility remaining.

13 Cory Reamer
Sophomore • Strong Safety • 6-3, 198
Hoover • Hoover

Cory Reamer proved to be a valuable special teams contributor in 2005 before a torn ACL

Ramzee Robinson

Travis Robinson

Chris Rogers

Keith Saunders

Zach Schreiber

Brian Selman

Ali Sharrief

Travis Sikes

ended his season prematurely. Reamer saw limited action in the spring while still rehabbing the injury but is expected to be ready this fall. In addition to his work on special teams, the former Hoover star is expected to provide depth at the strong safety position.

1 Ramzee Robinson
Senior • Left Cornerback • 5-10, 190
Huntsville • Butler
Back and wrist problems limited Ramzee Robinson's participation in spring drills, but the returning starter at left cornerback should be ready to go this fall. With 23 career starts already under his belt, Robinson will be relied on this season for not only his play but for his veteran leadership. Last year, Robinson turned in 32 tackles, one tackle for loss, two interceptions and seven passes broken up.

24 Travis Robinson
Junior • Left Cornerback • 5-10, 180
Tuscaloosa • Hillcrest
Travis Robinson wasn't able to participate in spring drills and isn't likely to see much game action this fall. He enters fall camp as the third-string left cornerback behind Ramzee Robinson and Chris Rogers. After playing in five of the Tide's first six games in 2004, Robinson missed the rest of the season because of injury and then did not see varsity action in 2005.

17 Chris Rogers
Freshman • Left Cornerback • 6-1, 178
Lakeland, Fla. • Evangel Christian
Chris Rogers enters fall camp as Ramzee Robinson's back-up at left cornerback. Rogers began turning heads in practice last fall as a true freshman cornerback and free safety but ultimately drew a redshirt. He settled in at cornerback in the spring.

94 Keith Saunders
Junior • Right End • 6-3, 246
Willingboro, N.J. • Hargrave Military Academy
One of the nice surprises of the spring, Keith Saunders goes into the season listed number one at right end. The New Jersey native began spring drills behind Bobby Greenwood but by the end of the spring had pulled ahead of him. Saunders put a nice finish on his solid spring in the A-Day Game, recording three tackles, one tackle for loss and a sack. Fittingly, Saunders received the Jerry Duncan "I Like to Practice" Award for his efforts. In 2005, Saunders saw reserve duty in every game, registering 11 tackles, three tackles for loss and one sack.

46 Zach Schreiber
Freshman • Strongside Linebacker • 6-2, 240
Shreveport, La. • Evangel Christian
Zach Schreiber is expected to serve this season as Terrence Jones' back-up at strongside linebacker. Schreiber redshirted as a true freshman last season and really began showing good progress late in spring practice. He'll need to continue to progress if he's going to stay ahead of Eryk Anders, who's listed number three at the position.

69 Brian Selman
Freshman • Snapper • 6-0, 195
Vestavia Hills • Vestavia Hills
Brian Selman enters fall camp as the team's back-up snapper behind Luke Spaulding.

29 Ali Sharrief
Freshman • Running Back • 5-9, 208
Stevenson • North Jackson
Ali Sharrief is part of a crowded running back field, but, unfortunately for Sharrief, he's currently not near the top of that crowd. After redshirting last year, he enters fall camp as a back-up running back, his exact spot depending on the health status of Glen Coffee. A hamstring injury in the spring certainly did nothing to help Sharrief's hopes of climbing the depth chart. In the two spring scrimmages he was able to participate in, he totaled seven carries for 56 yards. Two newcomers this fall, Mike Ford and Terry Grant, will give Sharrief even more competition. A defensive star in high school, Sharrief should be a help on special teams.

48 Travis Sikes
Freshman • Strong Safety • 6-4, 195
Nashville, Tenn. • Christ Presbyterian
Travis Sikes grayshirted last fall, waiting to enroll in classes and join the team in the spring. The good-sized Tennessee native made a positive first impression, quickly earning a reputation as a playmaker on defense. He enters fall camp number three on the depth chart at strong safety, backing up Jeffrey Dukes and Rashad Johnson.

42 Juwan Simpson
Senior • Weakside Linebacker • 6-3, 222
Decatur • Austin
One of only four returning starters on defense, Juwan Simpson is expected to be one of the emotional and vocal leaders of the defense, in addition to leading by example with his play. Last season, Simpson recorded 64 tackles, six stops behind the line, one-and-a-half sacks, two interceptions and four pass break-ups. He was a standout in the A-Day contest with a game-high eight tackles, tying Simeon

Juwan Simpson

Luke Spaulding

B.J. Stabler

Marcel Stamps

Nikita Stover

Kyle Tatum

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Castille. As proof of his leadership ability, Simpson earned the Derrick Thomas Community Award in the spring.

66 Luke Spaulding
Junior • Snapper • 6-0, 213
Mobile • Charleston Southern
After a very good spring, Luke Spaulding appears to be the top candidate to replace two-year starter Drew Lane as the Tide's snapper this fall.

61 B.J. Stabler
Sophomore • Right Guard • 6-4, 295
Grove Hill • Clarke County
B.J. Stabler, perhaps a star in the making, returns as the Tide's starting right guard after assuming the number one spot early in the 2005 season. The Grove Hill native, who has overcome finger and knee injuries since arriving at The Capstone in 2004, appears now to be enjoying a string of good luck regarding injuries. He participated in 609 snaps last year en route to earning Freshman All-SEC honors. He had a solid, injury-free spring.

6 Marcel Stamps
Junior • Weakside Linebacker • 6-3, 215
Brantley • Brantley
Marcel Stamps enters fall camp as the Tide's third-string weakside linebacker behind Juwan Simpson and Demarcus Waldrop. Stamps saw action in every game last year, primarily on special teams, and tallied five tackles. The junior actually began his career at Alabama as a split end before moving to linebacker during his freshman season.

9 Nikita Stover
Sophomore • Flanker • 6-1, 190
Hartselle • Itawamba Community College
Nikita Stover, who originally signed with Alabama in 2004, joined the Tide this past the spring and is expected to help bolster the receiving corps this fall. He's currently listed as the team's number two flanker behind starter D.J. Hall. At Itawamba Community College in 2004, Stover caught 26 passes for 588 yards and six touchdowns and also led the Mississippi junior college ranks in kick returns, averaging 30 yards per return. Stover sat out the 2005 season so he would have three years of eligibility remaining at Alabama. Coming out of high school, Stover was rated a four-star recruit and the number one prospect in the state of Alabama.

58 Kyle Tatum
Senior • Right Tackle • 6-8, 290
Prattville • Prattville
The lone senior on Bama's offensive line and a returning starter at right tackle, Kyle Tatum will be counted on for both leadership and solid play in 2006. After playing on the defensive line as a freshman, Tatum has made good strides the past two seasons as an offensive lineman, earning Honorable Mention All-SEC honors in 2005.

40 Theo Townsend
Sophomore • Running Back • 5-9, 172
Antioch, Tenn. • Brentwood Academy
He may not be the Tide's number one running back anymore, as he was prior to the 2004 Music City Bowl, but Theo Townsend continues to contribute to the team in other ways. He saw action in all 12 games last year with all of it coming on special teams. Townsend also continues to work at the running back spot–even though he's not near the top of the depth chart. In five scrimmages in the spring, he totaled 53 yards on 22 carries.

Theo Townsend

Roy Upchurch

Ken Vandervoort

Demarcus Waldrop

Nick Walker

Byron Walton

Lorenzo Washington

John Parker Wilson

28 Roy Upchurch

Freshman • Running Back • 6-0, 193

Tallahassee, Fla. • Godby

Roy Upchurch went from being a hot-shot newcomer to damaged goods to hospital patient to major question mark to huge surprise–all in the span of about eight months. The former Parade All-America running back was off to an auspiciously unspectacular start in fall camp when it was discovered that he had a serious ankle injury involving lack of blood flow. He underwent surgery, redshirted the 2005 season and went through rehabilitation. It was unclear when he would be ready to play again or even if he would be able to play again. He was expected to see limited action at most in the spring. Not only did Upchurch surpass expectations by practicing full-speed–he dazzled. In five spring scrimmages, he ran for 258 yards and two touchdowns on 52 carries to go along with five receptions for 43 more yards. It was enough to earn him the Johnny Musso Most Improved Offensive Back Award. The Tallahassee native goes into fall camp third on the depth chart behind Kenneth Darby and Jimmy Johns.

53 Ken Vandervoort

Junior • Middle Linebacker • 6-3, 216

Anniston • Donoho

Ken Vandervoort enters fall camp number three on the depth chart at middle linebacker but isn't likely to see much playing time–unless it's on special teams. The junior did show during the spring he has the ability to make plays, recording three tackles in the A-Day Game.

44 Demarcus Waldrop

Junior • Weakside Linebacker • 5-11, 190

Pinson • Pinson Valley

Demarcus Waldrop enters fall camp as Juwan Simpson's back-up at weakside linebacker, although he's also capable of playing strongside linebacker. The good news is, wherever Waldrop might line up, he's got plenty of experience. The Pinson product, who's a bit undersized for his position, has seen reserve duty in every game the past two seasons and collected a total of 38 tackles, five stops behind the line, one-and-a-half sacks, one fumble recovery, one forced fumble, two pass break-ups, and two quarterback pressures. He had four tackles and one stop behind the line in the A-Day Game.

88 Nick Walker

Sophomore • Tight End • 6-5, 245

Brundidge • Pike County

As Nick Walker is finding out, even earning Freshman All-SEC honors doesn't guarantee starter status as a sophomore. Walker started all 11 regular season games for the Tide, hauling in nine passes for 120 yards while also taking care of his blocking assignments. He gave way to Travis McCall in the Cotton Bowl, and McCall remained slightly ahead of Walker on the depth chart through the spring. Not that Walker was unproductive by any means. In four spring scrimmages, the Brundidge native showed he might be the best pass-catching tight end of the group. He caught 11 passes for 133 yards and one touchdown.

77 Byron Walton

Freshman • Nose Tackle • 6-4, 298

Trinity • West Morgan

Bama fans may not recognize the name Byron Walton right now, but they may very soon–if not this year, then almost certainly 2007. Walton toiled in anonymity on the scout team defense last fall but earned positive reviews and then continued to progress in the spring. The redshirt freshman enters fall camp battling Brandon Fanney behind Dominic Lee and J.P. Adams on the depth chart at nose tackle. Two of the three players ahead of him are seniors.

97 Lorenzo Washington

Freshman • Left Tackle • 6-4, 265

Loganville, Ga. • Hargrave Military Academy

By all indications, this may be Lorenzo Washington's first and last season as a back-up left tackle. The redshirt freshman had an impressive spring, turning in some of the more awe-inspiring plays and goes into this season number two at left tackle behind senior starter Jeremy Clark. Washington played at Hargrave Military Academy in 2004 after originally signing with the Tide in February 2004.

14 John Parker Wilson

Sophomore • Quarterback • 6-2, 215

Hoover • Hoover

John Parker Wilson appears to be the guy who will have the task of replacing record-setting passer Brodie Croyle. While Wilson, who's trying to hold off a challenge from Marc Guillon, doesn't have the ultra-quick release of Croyle nor the wealth of experience Croyle had under his belt last season, he does have his own strengths he brings to the position. Wilson is a mobile quarterback with good arm strength, and he knows how to lead a team to a championship, having guided Hoover to a state title in 2003. And even though Wilson has never started for the Tide, he is quite familiar with the Tide's offensive system, having played in it for two springs and one fall. As Croyle's back-up last season, Wilson completed 7-of-11 passes for 98 yards, two touchdowns and no interceptions. He also ran for a touchdown against Auburn. In five scrimmages this past spring, Wilson's cumulative stats were: 70-of-114 for 792 yards and five touchdowns. He threw five interceptions.■

2006 Alabama Signees

Earl Alexander

Quarterback • 6-4, 203

Phenix City • Central

Don't throw away those Alexander the Great signs just yet. While Earl Alexander isn't likely to line up at running back at Alabama as 1990s star Shaun Alexander did, the Phenix City native has all the physical tools to be a huge playmaker as either a quarterback or receiver. As a prep senior last season, Alexander passed for 1,200 yards and 10 touchdowns and ran for 500 yards and seven more TDs. The coveted honorable mention 6A all-state selection selected Alabama over Auburn, Georgia, LSU and Tennessee. Offering a unique blend of size, speed and strength, Alexander is projected by most to end up at receiver for the Crimson Tide.

Javier Arenas

Cornerback • 5-10, 182

Tampa, Fla. • Robinson

Anytime you can draw favorable comparisons to Tyrone Prothro, as Javier Arenas has already done, that's a good thing. As a prep senior last year, the multi-threat Floridian returned seven kicks for touchdowns and also found the end zone as a running back, receiver and punt returner. He even returned a fumble for a score. While it seems obvious Arenas will be a special teams contributor at Alabama, it's a little less obvious where he will line up as an every-down player. He could be a cornerback or receiver. Somewhat surprisingly, the 3A all-state performer was considered a bit of a lucky find for the Crimson Tide. Unknown to most of the larger Division I schools, Arenas originally committed to Florida Atlantic before switching to Alabama as soon as Tide coaches offered him a scholarship.

Tremayne Coger

Cornerback • 5-10, 176

Columbia, Tenn. • Central

A versatile athlete, Tremayne Coger starred as a running back, defensive back and kick returner in high school. As a junior in 2004, he rushed for 617 yards and scored 13 touchdowns and likely would have improved on those numbers as a senior if not for a high ankle sprain. Playing in only five games, he finished the 2005 season with 350 yards rushing and one interception. With Coger's knack for finding the end zone, Tide coaches may try and use him on offense, but it appears more likely he'll end up on defense.

Andy Davis

Safety • 6-0, 200

Birmingham • Briarwood Christian

Andy Davis, who became a Tide fan after watching Dennis Riddle score the winning touchdown against Auburn in 1996, didn't need much time deciding where he wanted to play college football. He was Alabama's first verbal commitment in 2005 (for the '06 signing class), and it appears Bama got a good one. Davis was a four-year starter for Briarwood Christian, recording more than 400 career tackles from his safety position. As a senior last season, the all-state selection had 126 tackles and three interceptions and was named Shelby County's Defensive Player of the Year. Speed is considered his greatest asset, but Davis is also known as a hard hitter.

Preston Dial

Tight End • 6-4, 242

Mobile • UMS-Wright

Alabama's tight end position, hit hard by injuries just a few seasons ago, keeps looking better and better. The latest addition to the spot is Preston Dial, last year's 4A Lineman of the Year and a four-star prospect by Scout.com. Dial caught 22 passes for 455 yards and four touchdowns as a prep senior last year, helping lead UMS-Wright to a state championship. The Mobile native is known for his quickness off the line, his terrific blocking skills and his good hands. Rated the nation's 18th best tight end prospect, Dial, a lifelong Crimson Tide fan, picked Alabama over Auburn, Florida State, LSU and Tennessee.

Mike Ford

Halfback • 6-2, 205

Sarasota, Fla. • Hargrave Military Academy

Mike Ford said he wants to take over for Kenneth Darby when he leaves. That's not just wishful thinking. As a prep senior in 2004, he set the Florida state record with 2,837 yards rushing and 37 touchdowns. He averaged an amazing 236.3 yards per game and had a streak of seven consecutive games of over 200 yards rushing, helping lead Sarasota to a 10-2 record. Florida's Class 5A Player of the Year in 2004 originally signed with Alabama in 2005 but, for academic reasons, had to spend a year at Hargrave Military Academy where he averaged nearly 10 yards per carry last fall en route to racking up more than 900 yards on the ground. Size, speed, great instincts, toughness and competitiveness are some of the attributes that made Ford such a prized signee. He's been timed at an impressive sub 11.0 in the 100-meter dash.

Terry Grant

Halfback • 5-10, 187

Lumberton, Miss. • Lumberton

For the second consecutive year, Mississippi's Mr. Football has become Mr. Alabama signee. In 2005 it was Jimmy Johns. In '06 it was Terry Grant, who, like Johns, looks like another splendid steal for the Crimson Tide. Grant rushed for 2,720 yards and 35 touchdowns last season after totaling 2,615 yards and 31 touchdowns as a

junior. Lumberton, not surprisingly, won state titles both seasons. Smaller than Alabama's other running back signee, Mike Ford, Grant excels using a blend of speed, acceleration, balance and cutback ability. The all-state selection picked the Tide over Southern Miss, Florida State and Memphis.

Charlie Higgenbotham

Linebacker • 6-0, 210

Mountain Brook • Mountain Brook

A candidate to grayshirt this fall and re-sign with Alabama in the spring, Charlie Higgenbotham is coming off a senior season cut short by an ACL injury. The inside linebacker recorded 169 tackles and two interceptions as a junior and 97 tackles as a sophomore. He's projected as a weakside linebacker at Alabama. The three-star recruit was one of two Mountain Brook standouts to sign with the Tide in '06.

LaBronski Hutchins

Linebacker • 6-3, 190

Alexander City • Benjamin Russell

LaBronski Hutchins was a tackling machine as a defensive end in high school but is expected to make the move to outside linebacker at Alabama. As a prep senior last season, the Alexander City native registered more than 100 tackles en route to earning all-state honors. He had 75 tackles and 18 sacks as a junior.

Marquis Johnson

Defensive Back • 6-1, 175

Sarasota, Fla. • Booker

Marquis Johnson said Tide fans are going to be happy to see him play for Alabama. He's probably right. The Sarasota, Fla., product, who is projected to play cornerback at Alabama, is considered a talented cover guy with speed and toughness to match up with most receivers. Despite missing several games with a high ankle sprain last season, he was still able to rack up 41 tackles and three interceptions and help his team reach the state finals. He had 50 tackles and 11 pass break-ups as a junior. The three-star recruit can return punts, too. He averaged 23 yards per return last season.

Jake Jones

Defensive Back • 6-1, 180

Mountain Brook • Mountain Brook

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whose fathers also donned the crimson and white. Jones, the son of former star receiver Joey Jones, is projected as a defensive back at Alabama but may follow in his dad's footsteps and line up at receiver. The three-star recruit, who was coached by his famous father at Mountain Brook High, recorded 34 tackles and three interceptions last season to go along with 200 yards receiving and 400 yards on punt returns. Jones, as one might expect, grew up a Crimson Tide fan and has three friends–Andy Davis, David Ross and Charlie Higgenbotham–who are part of the '06 signing class. Jones picked the Tide over LSU, South Carolina, Vanderbilt and West Virginia.

Charlie Kirschman

Linebacker • 6-2, 225

St. Augustine, Fla. • Nease

Charlie Kirschman hopes his bad injury luck is behind him. So do Tide coaches, players and fans. Kirschman was hampered by an ankle injury throughout last season and then topped off his senior campaign by suffering a dislocated shoulder that required surgery. He finished with 31 tackles in 2005. It was during his injury-free junior season that Kirschman really drew the attention of college coaches, recording 98 tackles and eight sacks. The three-star recruit, a former prep teammate of current Tide receiver Will Oakley, has the size to play inside linebacker at Alabama but has the instincts and quickness to play outside.

Mike McCoy

Wide Receiver • 6-2, 195

Brandon, Miss. • Northwest

Mike McCoy was a bit of a secret during the recruiting period due, in large part, because he missed three games of his senior season with an Achilles injury. Alabama coaches, however, knew all about him. In fact, McCoy was Alabama's number one target at the receiver position for this year's signing class. Despite his abbreviated season, McCoy caught 42 passes for 821 yards and seven touchdowns last season for Northwest High School. The three-star recruit is known for his blazing speed. He's also an excellent student.

Greg McElroy

Quarterback • 6-2, 210

Southlake, Texas • Carroll

Alabama couldn't get the big quarterback steal out of Florida. So it got it in Texas. With highly publicized recruit Tim Tebow electing to stay in-state, the Tide turned to the Lone Star State and persuaded Greg McElroy to switch his commitment from Texas Tech to Alabama. The fact that a passing machine school like Texas Tech wanted McElroy says a lot about the caliber of passer Alabama now has in its fold. The Southlake, Texas, native played behind two-time Texas 5A Player of the Year Chase Daniel for two seasons before finally getting his opportunity to shine last season. And shine he did. McElroy passed for 4,687 yards and a state record 56 touchdowns with only nine interceptions, and he also rushed for 700 yards and 12 more touchdowns. His efforts helped lead undefeated Carroll High School to the Class 5A state championship game where McElroy completed 21-of-31 passes for 328 yards and four touchdowns and was named the game's MVP. He was also named the Class 5A Offensive Player of the Year. The three-star recruit is noted for having good arm strength, exceptional accuracy and, as evidenced by Carroll's 2005 season, the leadership skills needed to lead a team to victory.

Bryan Motley

Offensive Lineman • 6-2, 274

Autaugaville • Autaugaville

Alabama coaches discovered a gem during last summer's football camp, and they weren't about to let it get away. Coaches working with the linemen from that camp session singled out Motley as being the most dominant lineman present and made sure he had a scholarship offer. The standout offensive lineman accepted and comes to Alabama after a stellar senior season in which he earned Class 1A Player of the Year honors and helped lead Autaugaville to an undefeated season. The two-time all-state selection and three-star recruit also starred on the defensive line in high school, recording 145 tackles, six sacks and 16 tackles for loss in 2005. He's expected to be an offensive lineman at Alabama, but could move to defense.

Taylor Pharr

Offensive Lineman • 6-6, 265

Birmingham • Shades Valley

As far as pure strength is concerned, it's hard to imagine Taylor Pharr not being at the top of the list among Alabama's '06 signees. The Birmingham native is a workout warrior who was bench pressing 325 pounds and squatting 425 pounds last winter. At Pharr's current rate of progression, he was expected to be in the mid-400s in the bench press and mid-600s in the squat by mid-summer. More importantly, Pharr has shown he knows how to use all that power on the football field, earning honorable mention all-state honors last season at Shades Valley High School. Because of his size and quickness, he's expected to be able to play either tackle or guard for the Tide. Rated one of the state's top three offensive linemen last year, Pharr selected Alabama over LSU, Auburn and Vanderbilt.

David Ross

Offensive Lineman • 6-4, 285

Homewood • Homewood

David Ross believes Alabama will be competing for a few national championships in the coming years. If he's right, the Homewood native will no doubt be a big reason why. Rated the state's second-best offensive lineman behind Andre Smith, Ross has already led one team to a championship–his high school, Homewood. He was a three-year starter for the Patriots and played every position along the offensive line. And it seemed wherever he lined up and came off the ball, that was the direction the Patriots enjoyed their most success. The two-time all-state selection and four-star recruit was named the Class 5A Lineman of the Year in 2005. Ross, who picked Alabama over Auburn, Florida and LSU, is projected to play on the interior offensive line for the Crimson Tide.

Andre Smith

Offensive Lineman • 6-4, 315

Birmingham • Huffman

Alabama's image as a contender for national prospects as well as its chances for winning a 13th national championship in the next few years got a huge boost when, on National Signing Day, Andre Smith reached under a table, pulled out a houndstooth hat and placed it on his head. The Birmingham native was rated the top offensive lineman in not just the state but in the entire country and tabbed as the overall number two prospect in the country. He recorded an amazing 88 pancake blocks in 2005 en route to becoming the first offensive lineman to be named the state's Mr. Football in the 23 years the honor has been given. The two-time all-state selection and Class 6A Lineman of the Year in 2005 was also one of four finalists for the Walter Payton Award, given to the nation's top prep player. Smith, also known for his solid character, is expected to play left tackle for the Tide and could win a starting job perhaps as soon as this fall. Smith chose Alabama over USC, LSU and Florida.

Alex Stadler

Offensive Lineman • 6-6, 300

Bealeton, Va. • Liberty

Count Alex Stadler among the many outsiders over the years who have visited The Capstone, fallen in love with the Crimson Tide and bolted their home state. The Virginia native picked Alabama over Virginia Tech, Notre Dame, Michigan and Miami after being utterly impressed by the Tide's game atmosphere. as the city of Tuscaloosa itself. For Alabama, it was another great steal. Stadler, an all-state selection and a four-star recruit, was considered one of the top offensive line prospects in the country last year. He's noted for being well-schooled in the fundamentals of staying low, keeping his balance, not losing leverage and providing excellent pass protection. He could play guard or tackle at Alabama.

Milton Talbert

Defensive Lineman • 6-3, 235

Hattiesburg, Miss. • Hattiesburg

Ironically, Alabama's lone defensive line signee in '06 has the raw athleticism to play any number of positions for the Crimson Tide. But it does appear that Milton Talbert will at least start off as a defensive end, his most natural position. The Hattiesburg, Miss., product recorded 111 tackles, 12 sacks, five fumble recoveries and three forced fumbles last season to earn all-state accolades. He had 90 tackles and one interception as a junior. Talbert, who announced his college choice on National Signing Day, picked Alabama over Mississippi State.

Marcus Udell

Cornerback • 5-11, 180

Tallahassee, Fla. • Godby

Plucked from Florida State's backyard, Tallahassee native Marcus Udell offers a nice blend of speed, quickness and physical play as a cornerback. He picked off eight passes to go along with 50 tackles last season and had 54 tackles and four interceptions as a junior. He also saw action as a receiver. Udell, who participated in the prestigious CaliFlorida Bowl, chose Alabama over LSU and Maryland.

Justin Woodall

Safety • 6-1, 200

Oxford, Miss. • Lafayette

A versatile, all-around athlete, Justin Woodall was a playmaker on both sides of the ball as a prepster but is expected to find a home at safety at Alabama. With the knack he has for picking off passes, it would be hard not to stick Woodall in the secondary. As a junior, he made 16 interceptions to tie the state record set by current NFL quarterback Steve McNair. Last season, with offenses doing their best to stay away from him, he still managed to collect four interceptions, to go along with 47 tackles. Offensively in 2005, the Oxford, Miss., product totaled 1,460 yards and scored eight touchdowns. He saw action at both quarterback and receiver. Woodall selected Alabama over LSU and his hometown university, Ole Miss.

Grayshirts who re-signed with Alabama

(See The 2006 Crimson Tide section)

Sam Burnthall, DB, 6-3, 190, Decatur

Cole Harvey, TE, 6-3, 255, Tallahassee, Fla.

Travis Sikes, DB, 6-3, 190, Nashville, Tenn. ■

ALABAMA DEPTH CHART BY CLASS

Here is a look at Alabama's depth chart by class. Those who took part in spring football practice may not end up at the positions on this depth chart. For instance, Javier Arenas was listed as our belief he will be at a wide receiver position. This does not include all walk-ons.

Offense

Position	Senior	Junior	Sophomore	Redshirt Freshman	Freshman
Split End		Brown	Caddell McDaniel		McCoy
Left Tackle		Capps	C. Davis	M. Johnson	Smith Stadler
Left Guard		Moon	M. Davis Britt		
Center			Caldwell	Cardwell	Ross
Right Guard			Stabler	Deaton	
Right Tackle	Tatum		Davidson	D. Davis	Pharr
Tight End			McCall Walker Hoke		Harvey Dial
Quarterback	Guillon		Wilson	Barnes	Alexander McElroy
Halfback	Darby		Johns Coffee Townsend	Upchurch Sharrief	Ford Grant
Fullback	McClain T. Castille	Denniston		Huber	Hanrahan
Flanker	Prothro	D.J. Hall	Stover Oakley		Arenas
Placekicker		Christensen		Friedman	Tiffin
Snapper	Spaulding			Selman	

Defense

Position	Senior	Junior	Sophomore	Redshirt Freshman	Freshman
Left End	Harris	Gilberry		Deaderick	
Left Tackle	Clark	J. Johnson		Washington	Motley
Nose Tackle	Lee Adams			Fanney Walton	
Right End		Saunders Knight	Greenwood		Talbert
Strongside Linebacker	T. Jones			Schreiber Anders	Higginbotham
Middle Linebacker		Collins Vandervoort Mustin		P. Hall	Kirschman
Weakside Linebacker	Simpson	Waldrop Stamps	Keys		Hutchins
Left Cornerback	R. Robinson		T. Robinson	Rogers	Udell J. Jones
Right Cornerback		S. Castille Gray	Mitchell		Coger M. Johnson
Strong Safety	Dukes		R. Johnson Reamer		Sikes Woodall
Safety	Kilpatrick	M. Carter			Burnthall A. Davis
Punter			Eads	Fitzgerald	Hill

Final 2005 Alabama Football Statistics

Record: 10-2SEC: 6-2Tuscaloosa: 6-1Road: 3-1Neutral: 1-0

2005 Alabama Football Results

Date	Opponent	Site	Result	(Attendance)
Sept. 3	Middle Tennessee	Tuscaloosa	UofA 26, MTSU 7	(81,018)
Sept. 10	Southern Miss	Tuscaloosa	UofA 30, USM 21	(81,018)
Sept. 17	South Carolina	Columbia	UofA 37, South Carolina 14	(82,968)
Sept. 24	Arkansas	Tuscaloosa	UofA 24, Arkansas 13	((81,018)
Oct. 1	Florida	Tuscaloosa	UofA 31, Florida 3	(81,018)
Oct. 15	Mississippi	Oxford	UofA 13, Ole Miss 10	(60,135)
Oct. 22	Tennessee	Tuscaloosa	UofA 6, Tennessee 3	(81,018)
Oct. 29	Utah State (HC)	Tuscaloosa	UofA 35, Utah State 3	(81,018)
Nov. 5	Mississippi State	Starkville	UofA 17, Mississippi State 0	(52,125)
Nov. 12	LSU	Tuscaloosa	LSU 16, UofA 13 (OT)	(81,018)
Nov. 19	Auburn	Auburn	Auburn 28, UofA 18	(87,451)
Jan. 2	Texas Tech	Cotton Bowl, Dallas	UofA 13, Texas Tech 10	(74,222)

Individual Offense

RUSHING	G	No	Net	Gain	Loss	Avg.	TD	LP
Darby	12	239	1242	1294	52	5.2	3	48
Johns	12	38	202	219	17	5.3	0	25
Coffee	12	48	179	199	20	3.7	0	37
Castille	11	45	124	124	0	2.8	7	15
Prothro	5	9	92	92	0	10.2	0	41
McClain	12	8	39	39	0	4.9	0	13
Brown	11	2	12	12	0	6.0	0	6
Brooks	9	1	-3	0	-3	-3.0	0	-3
Wilson	5	3	-6	3	9	-2.0	1	2
Croyle	12	64	-156	114	270	-2.4	1	20
Team	12	6	-15	0	-15	-2.5	0	-2
PASSING	**G**	**Att**	**Comp**	**HI**	**Yds**	**Pct.**	**TD**	**LP**
Croyle	12	339	202	4	2499	59.6	14	87
Wilson	5	11	7	0	98	63.6	2	37
Guillon	2	1	0	0	0	0.0	0	0
RECEIVING	**G**	**No**		**Yds**	**Avg.**	**TD**		**LP**
Hall	11	48		676	14.1	5		56
Brown	11	34		642	18.9	4		76
Prothro	5	17		325	19.1	3		87
Caddell	12	13		179	13.8	0		50
McClain	12	18		140	7.8	2		21
Darby	12	29		132	4.6	0		17
Knight	12	11		126	11.5	1		27
Walker	12	9		120	13.3	0		34
Coffee	12	8		91	11.4	1		40
T. Castille	11	10		56	5.6	0		11
Miller	12	4		52	13.0	0		18
McCall	12	3		22	7.3	0		19
Brooks	9	2		20	10.0	0		11
McKnight	5	2		13	6.5	0		8
Bennett	9	1		3	3.0	0		3
PUNTING	**G**		**No**	**Yds**	**Avg.**		**BLK**	**LP**
Schatz	11		60	2300	38.3		1	72
Aul	2		6	195	32.5		0	44
Team	12	1		–	–	1		–
PUNT RETURNS	**G**		**No**	**Yds**	**Avg.**		**TD**	**LP**
Prothro	5		11	81	7.4		0	21
Brooks	9		11	77	7.0		0	33
S. Castille	11		2	38	19.0	0	21	
Madison	12		1	0	0.0		0	0
Hall	11		2	-1	-0.5		0	-1
KICKOFF RETURNS	**G**		**No**	**Yds**	**Avg.**		**TD**	**LP**
Prothro	5		7	193	27.6		0	66
Brooks	9		6	121	20.2		0	25
Hall	11		2	48	24.0		0	29
Coffee	12		2	25	12.5		0	13
Bennett	9		1	13	13.0		0	13

SCORING	TD	PAT	FG-FGA	SAF	2-PT	TOTAL
Christensen		25-26	16-25			73
T. Castille	7					42
D.J. Hall	5					30
Brown	4					24
Prothro	3					18
Darby	3					18
McClain	2					12
Croyle	1					6
Coffee	1					6
Knight	1					6
Saxby		3-3	1-2			6
Miller	1					6
Griffin	1					6
Wilson	1					6
TEAM				1		2

Final 2005 Alabama Football Statistics

Record: 10-2SEC: 6-2Tuscaloosa: 6-1Road: 3-1Neutral: 1-0

Team

SCORE BY QUARTERS:

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	OT		Total
ALABAMA	67	61	77	55	3	–	263
Opponents	52	27	13	30	6	–	128

	U of A	Opponents
TOTAL FIRST DOWNS	222	162
By Rushing	103	63
By Passing	102	88
By Penalty	17	11
TOTAL OFFENSIVE YARDS	4307	3061
Avg. Gain Per Game	358.9	255.1
Total Plays	814	713
Avg. Plays Per Game	67.8	59.4
Avg. Gain Per Play	5.3	4.3
NET YARDS RUSHING	1710	1132
Avg. Gain Per Game	142.5	94.3
Rushing Attempts	463	361
Avg. Gain Per Rush	3.7	3.1
Yards Gained Rushing	2096	1459
Yards Lost Rushing	386	327
NET YARDS PASSING	2597	1929
Avg. Gain Per Game	216.4	160.8
Avg. Gain Per Attempt	7.4	5.5
Avg. Gain Per Completion	12.4	11.0
Attempts	351	352
Completions	209	175
Percentage	59.5%	49.7%
Had Intercepted	4	11
PASSES INTERCEPTED BY	11	4
Yards Returned	155	43
Average Return	14.1	10.8
PUNTING AVERAGE	37.2	42.4
Number of Punts	67	79
Yards Punted	2495	3352
Had Blocked	1	1
KICKOFFS RETURNED	18	36
Yards Returned	400	670
Average Return	22.2	18.6
PUNTS RETURNED	27	26
Yards Returned	195	209
Average Return	7.2	8.0
PENALTIES	74	83
Yards Penalized	561	679
Avg. Yards Per Game	46.8	56.6
FUMBLES-LOST	18-8	17-9
TOUCHDOWNS	30	15
By Rushing	12	5
By Passing	16	9
Other	2	1
FIELD GOALS -ATTEMPTS	17-28	8-18
EXTRA POINTS-ATTEMPTS	29-30	14-14
By Kicking	28-29	14-14
By Passing	1-1	0-0
By Rushing	0-0	0-0
By Defense	0	0
SAFETIES	1	0
TOTAL POINTS	263	128
Avg. Points Per Game	21.9	10.7
POSSESSION DOWNS	195	183
Conversions	73	54
Efficiency %	37.4%	29.5%
TIME OF POSSESSION	UofA	Opp.
First Quarter	92:52	87:08
Second	103:25	76:35
Third	94:44	85:16
Fourth	104:09	75:51
TOTAL	395:10	324:50
AVERAGE PER GAME	32:56	27:04

Individual Defense

TACKLES	Primary	Assist	Total For	Loss-Yards
Ryans	43	33	76	12-58
Harper	38	31	69	6.5-11
Roach	38	28	66	2.5-4
Simpson	35	29	64	5.5-23
Madison	32	12	44	1-1
Peprah	28	15	43	3-8
Anderson	24	16	40	14-62
Gilberry	17	20	37	8-43
Robinson	24	8	32	1-4
Castille	18	10	28	3-27
Jones	12	9	21	3-8
Clark	11	7	18	2.5-16
Dukes	10	6	16	
Griffin	7	9	16	2.5-5
Waldrop	7	9	16	0.5-2
Greenwood	9	6	15	4.5-27
Collins	6	7	13	
Saunders	3	8	11	1.5-5
Adams	2	7	9	
R. Johnson	5	3	8	
Harris	3	5	8	3.5-7
Gray	3	3	6	
Britt	2	4	6	1.5-4
Stamps	5	0	5	
Miller	4	1	5	
Keys	2	3	5	
Knight	3	1	4	
Johns	3	1	4	
Lee	2	2	4	
McClain	3	0	3	
Reamer	2	0	2	
Mitchell	1	1	2	
Brooks	1	0	1	
Aul	1	0	1	
Lane	1	0	1	
J. Johnson	1	0	1	
Tatum	1	0	1	
Darby	1	0	1	
Carter	0	1	1	

INTERCEPTIONS	G	No	Yds	Avg	TD	LP
Robinson	12	2	60	30.0	0	39
Simpson	12	2	7	3.5	0	7
S. Castille	11	2	0	0.0	0	0
Harper	12	1	50	50.0	0	50
Griffin	12	1	17	17.0	1	17
Harris	12	1	14	14.0	0	14
Ryans	12	1	7	7.0	0	7
Dukes	12	1	0	0.0	0	0

FUMBLES CAUSED: S. Castille 2, Harper 2, Peprah 2, Roach 1, Brooks 1, Reamer 1, Anderson 1, Ryans 1, Johns 1

FUMBLES RECOVERED: Ryans 2, Peprah 2, Keys 1, Griffin 1, Gilberry 1, Miller 1

PASSES BROKEN UP: Roach 9, Castille 7, Robinson 7, Madison 6, Peprah 5, Ryans 2, Jones 1, Adams 1, Lee 1, Dukes 1, Greenwood 1, Harper 1, Harris 1, Waldrop 1, Gilberry 1

QUARTERBACK PRESSURES: Anderson 7, Gilberry 6, Greenwood 5, Ryans 4, Simpson 4, Jones 3, Roach 2, Peprah 1, Adams 1, Clark 1

KICKS BLOCKED: Britt 1(FG), S. Castille 1 (punt), Anderson 1 (FG)

2006 Alabama Numerical Football Roster

No	NAME, POS	CL	HT	WT	EXP	HOMETOWN
1	Ramzee Robinson, LCB	SR	5-10	182	3L	Huntsville
2	Simeon Castille, RCB	JR	6-1	187	2L	Birmingham
3	Jeffrey Dukes, SS	SR	6-3	190	2L	Oxford, Miss.
4	Tyrone Prothro, FL	SR	5-8	175	3L	Heflin
6	Marcel Stamps, WLB	JR	6-3	190	2L	Brantley
7	Will Oakley, FL	SO	6-1	190	SQ	Ponte Vedra Bch, Fla.
9	Nikita Stover, FL	SO	6-2	205	Tr	Hartselle
10	Jimmy Johns, HB	SO	6-2	225	1L	Brookhaven, Miss.
11	Matt Caddell, SE	JR	6-0	180	2L	McCalla
11	P.J. Fitzgerald, P	FR	6-0	190	RS	Coral Springs, Fla.
13	Cory Reamer, SS	SO	6-4	208	Sq	Hoover
14	John Parker Wilson, QB	SO	6-2	215	Sq	Hoover
15	Jimmy Barnes, QB	FR	6-5	225	RS	Los Alamitos, Calif.
15	Andrew Friedman, PK	FR	6-2	215	RS	Fairhope
16	Lionel Mitchell, RCB	SO	6-2	180	Sq	Stone Mtn, Ga.
17	Chris Rogers, RCB	FR	6-1	178	RS	Lakeland, Fla.
18	Marc Guillon, QB	SR	6-3	212	1L	Chico, Calif.
19	Tim Castille, FB/HB	SR	5-11	231	3L	Birmingham
20	Marcus Carter, SS	JR	6-1	190	2L	Fort Payne
20	Theo Townsend, HB	SO	5-8	172	1L	Antioch, Tenn.
21	Prince Hall, MLB	FR	6-0	240	RS	Moreno Valley, Calif.
22	DJ Hall, FL	JR	6-3	185	2L	Ft Walton Bch, Fla.
22	Adam Stewart, S	FR	5-10	205	HS	Duluth, Ga.
23	Justin Martin, P	FR	5-10	205	RS	Thomson, Ga.
23	Adam Slaughter, SE	FR	5-7	158	HS	Kimberly
24	Travis Robinson, LCB	SO	5-10	180	SQ	Tuscaloosa
25	Aaron McDaniel, WR	SO	6-1	166	SQ	Fort Paine
26	Alex Butt, SLB	FR	6-2	203	HS	Baltimore, Md.
27	Roy Upchurch, HB	FR	6-0	207	RS	Tallahassee, Fla.
27	Chris Boyd, MLB	FR	6-1	230	RS	Huntsville
29	Ali Sharrief, HB	FR	5-9	208	RS	Stevenson
29	Tyrone King, LCB	SO	5-10	190	Tr	Birmingham
30	Bryan Kilpatrick, SS	SR	6-4	193	SQ	Monroeville
31	Forress Rayford, LCB	JR	5-11	180	SQ	Mobile
32	Chris Keys, S	SO	6-2	205	1L	Stevenson
33	LéRon McClain, FB	Sr	6-1	258	3L	Northport
33	Patrick Burch, TE	SO	6-3	240	SQ	Navarre, Fla.
34	Kenneth Darby, HB	SR	5-11	205	3L	Huntsville
34	Courtney Moore, RCB	SO	5-10	185	SQ	Florence
35	Patrick Hanrahan, FB	FR	6-0	245	HS	Springville
36	Eric Gray, RCB	JR	5-11	186	2L	Trinity
37	Trent Dean, S	SO	6-0	185	SQ	Decatur
37	Johnathan Lowe, RB	JR	5-6	180	Tr	Phenix City
38	Glen Coffee, RB	SO	6-0	207	1L	Ft. Walton Bch, Fla.
39	Darwin Salaam, WR	SO	6-3	182	Sq	Madison
39	Jason Casey, SLB	SO	6-0	200	HS	Arab
40	Baron Huber, FB	FR	6-4	228	RS	Knoxville, Tenn.
41	Josh Frenchko, RB	FR	5-7	181	HS	Perry, Ga.
42	Juwan Simpson, WLB	SR	6-3	222	3L	Decatur
42	Max Martin, RB	JR	6-1	215	Tr	Madison
43	Sam Burnthall, S	FR	6-2	190	HS	Decatur
43	Daniel Weaver, RDE	FR	6-20	240	RS	Huntsville
44	Demarcus Waldrop, WLB	JR	5-11	193	2L	Pinson
45	Reyn Willis, TE	FR	6-5	225	RS	Raleigh, N.C.
46	Zach Schreiber, SLB	FR	6-2	220	RS	Shreveport, La.
48	Travis Sikes, S	FR	6-3	190	HS	Nashville, Tenn.
49	Rashad Johnson, SS	SO	6-1	183	1L	Sulligent
50	Justin Britt, LG	JR	6-4	285	2L	Cullman
51	Eryk Anders, SLB	FR	6-2	220	RS	Spring Branch, Tex.
53	Ken Vandervoort, MLB	JR	6-3	210	SQ	Anniston
54	Justin Johnson, RDT	JR	6-2	248	SQ	Northport
55	Terrence Jones, SLB	JR	6-0	216	3L	Fosters
56	Matt Collins, MLB	JR	6-1	241	2L	Pinson
57	Morgan Garner, C/RT	SO	6-2	245	SQ	Deatsville
57	Darren Mustin, MLB	JR	6-2	240	Tr	Brentwood, Tenn.
58	Kyle Tatum, RT	SR	6-7	298	3L	Prattville
59	Antoine Caldwell, C	SO	6-3	281	1L	Montgomery
61	B.J. Stabler, RG	SO	6-4	292	1L	Grove Hill

2006 Alabama Numerical Football Roster

No	NAME, POS	CL	HT	WT	EXP	HOMETOWN
64	Layne Rinks, RG	SO	6-2	275	SQ	Florence
65	Joshua Curry, RG	SO	6-2	319	Tr	Tuscaloosa
66	Luke Spalding, SN	SR	6-0	217	SQ	Mobile
67	J.P. Adams, LDT	SR	6-3	267	1L	Northport
68	Al Jefferson, RG	SO	6-2	275	SQ	Mobile
69	Brian Selman, SN	FR	6-0	195	RS	Vestavia Hills
70	Evan Cardwell, C	FR	6-3	290	RS	Killen
71	Scott Deaton, RG	FR	6-5	270	RS	Birmingham
72	Chris Capps, LT	JR	6-5	295	2L	Jonesboro, Ga.
73	Justin Moon, LG	JR	6-5	296	1L	Guntersville
74	Trent Davidson, RT	SO	6-5	270	1L	Brewton
75	Cody Davis, LT	SO	6-7	282	1L	Tuscaloosa
76	Marlon Davis, LG	SO	6-4	315	1L	Columbus, Ga.
77	Byron Walton, RDT	FR	6-4	298	RS	Trinity
78	Mike Johnson, LT	FR	6-6	285	RS	Pensacola, Fla.
79	Drew Davis, RT	FR	6-6	290	RS	Evergreen
81	Keith Brown, SE	JR	6-3	185	2L	Pensacola, Fla.
82	Michael Dowdell, WR	FR	5-8	155	HS	Opelika
83	Travis McCall, TE	SO	6-2	260	1L	Prattville
84	Zeke Knight, RDE	JR	6-4	230	2L	Wedowee
84	Daniel White, WR	JR	5-7	151	HS	Florence
85	Danny Barger, FL	SR	5-11	182	SQ	Tuscaloosa
86	Jamie Christensen, PK	JR	6-0	170	2L	Norcross, Ga.
86	Chris Carter, WR	SO	5-11	194	HS	Greensboro
87	Cole Harvey, TE	FR	6-3	255	HS	Tallahassee, Fla.
88	Nick Walker, TE	SO	6-5	245	1L	Brundidge
89	Charles Hoke, TE	SO	6-6	240	Sq	Birmingham
90	Barrett Earnest, TE	JR	6-3	224	SQ	Loretto
91	Chris Harris, LDE	SR	6-5	251	2L	Tuscaloosa
91	Will Denniston, FB	JR	6-3	225	SQ	Mobile
92	Wallace Gilberry, LDE	JR	6-2	255	2L	Bay Minette
93	Bobby Greenwood, RDE	SO	6-6	255	1L	Prattville
94	Keith Saunders, RDE	JR	6-3	242	1L	Willingboro, N.J.
95	Brandon Deaderick, LDE	FR	6-4	230	RS	Elizabethton, Ky.
96	Dominic Lee, RDT	SR	6-2	283	3L	Birmingham
96	Daniel Wood, TE	FR	6-3	235	RS	McCalla
97	Lorenzo Washington, DT	FR	6-4	265	RS	Loganville, Ga.
98	Brandon Fanney, DT	FR	6-5	270	RS	Morristown, Tenn.
99	Jeremy Clark, LDT	SR	6-3	299	3L	Daphne

Newcomers In The Fall

Name	Pos	Hgt	Wgt	40	Hometown (School)
Earl Alexander	QB-WR	6-4	203	4.55	Phenix City (Central)
Javier Arenas	DB	5-10	182	N/A	Tampa, Fla. (Robinson)
Tremayne Coger	CB	5-10	176	4.47	Columbia, Tenn. (Central)
Andy Davis	S	6-0	200	4.45	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Preston Dial	TE	6-4	242	4.75	Mobile (UMS Wright)
Mike Ford	RB	6-2	205	4.5	Sarasota, Fla. (Hargrave Military)
Terry Grant	RB	5-10	187	4.5	Lumberton, Miss.
Charlie Higgenbotham	LB	6-0	210	4.65	Mountain Brook
Adam Hill	P/PK	N/A	N/A	N/A	Douglasville, Ga. (Chapel)
LaBronski Hutchins	OLB	6-3	190	4.55	Alex City (Benjamin Russell)
Marquis Johnson	DB	6-1	175	4.6	Sarasota, Fla. (Booker)
Jake Jones	DB	6-1	180	4.5	Mountain Brook
Charlie Kirschman	LB	6-3	225	4.65	St. Augustine, Fla. (Nease)
Mike McCoy	WR	6-2	195	4.6	Brandon, Miss. (Northwest)
Greg McElroy	QB	6-2	210	4.8	Southlake, Texas (Carroll)
Bryan Motley	OL	6-2	274	5.3	Autaugaville
Taylor Pharr	OL	6-6	265	N/A	Birmingham (Shades Valley)
David Ross	OL	6-4	285	5.3	Homewood
André Smith	OL	6-4	315	5.2	Birmingham (Huffman)
Alex Stadler	OL	6-6	300	N/A	Bealeton, Va. (Liberty)
Nikita Stover	WR	6-1	190	4.45	Hartselle (Itawamba, Miss., JC)
Milton Talbert	DL	6-3	235	4.7	Hattiesburg, Miss.
Leigh Tiffin	PK	N/A	N/A	N/A	Muscle Shoals
Marcus Udell	CB	5-11	180	4.5	Tallahassee, Fla. (Godby)
Justin Woodall	S	6-1	200	4.75	Oxford, Miss. (Lafayette)

Crimson Tide Quick Facts

Alabama Football Coaching Staff

Head Coach	Mike Shula (Alabama, 1987)
College Record: 3 Seasons (Alabama), 20-17, 54.1%	
*Assistant Head Coach/Defensive Coordinator/Linebackers	Joe Kines (Jacksonville State, 1967)
*Offensive Coordinator/Quarterbacks	Dave Rader (Tulsa, 1980)
Special Teams Coordinator/Tight Ends	Dave Ungerer (Southern Connecticut State, 1980)
Secondary	Chris Ball (Missouri Western State, 1986)
Defensive Ends	David Turner (Davidson, 1985)
Defensive Tackles	Buddy Wyatt (TCU, 1989)
Offensive Line	Bobby Connelly (Texas A&M-Commerce, 1994)
Running Backs	Sparky Woods (Carson Newman, 1976)
Wide Receivers	Charlie Harbison (Gardner Webb, 1982)
Offensive Graduate Assistant	Danny Kimble (Jacksonville State, 2003)
Defensive Graduate Assistant	David Reeves (Alabama, 2004)
Strength & Conditioning	Rocky Colburn (Alabama, 1985)
Trainer	Rodney Brown (Alabama, 1976)
Equipment Manager	Tank Conerly (Ole Miss, 1980)
Director of Football Operations	Randy Ross (St. Bernard, 1975)
Assistan t Director of Football Relations	Tim Bowens (Alabama, 1999)

Location: Tuscaloosa, Alabama
Founded: April 12, 1831
President: Dr. Robert E. Witt
Athletics Director: Mal Moore
Faculty Chairman: Dr. Joe Hornsby
Nickname: Crimson Tide
Colors: Crimson and White
Enrollment: 21,750
Conference: Southeastern (Western Division)
First Year of Football: 1892
Stadium: Bryant-Denny (92,138)
All-Time Football Record: ^782-293-44 (71.9%)
^After NCAA forfeits: 774-301-43 (71.2%)
2005 Record: 10-2
2005 SEC Record: 6-2
Bowl: Cotton (UA 13, Texas Tech 10)
Final Ranking: 8
Offense: Pro-I
Defense: 4-3

OFFENSE

Lettermen Returning: 24
Starters Returning: 9
WR: Keith Brown, Matt Caddell
WR: D.J. Hall, Tyrone Prothro, Zeke Knight
LT: Chris Capps, Cody Davis
LG: Justin Moon
C: Antoine Caldwell
RG: B.J. Stabler, Marlon Davis
RT: Kyle Tatum
TE: Nick Walker, Travis McCall
QB: John Parker Wilson, Marc Guillon
FB: LéRon McClain, Tim Castille
HB: Kenneth Darby, Jimmy Johns, Glen Coffee, Theo Townsend, Rashad Johnson

Lettermen Lost: 11
WR: Matt Miller, David Steakley
WR: Brandon Brooks, Jake Collins
C: JB Closner, Taylor Britt
RG: Mark Sanders
TE: Greg McLain
QB: Brodie Croyle
FB: Kyle Bennett, Victor Horn

DEFENSE

Lettermen Returning: 19
Starters Returning: 4
RDE: Bobby Greenwood, Keith Saunders
NT: Dominic Lee, J.P. Adams
LT: Jeremy Clark, Justin Britt
LE: Wallace Gilberry, Chris Harris
WLB: Juwan Simpson, Demarcus Waldrop, Marcel Stamps
MLB: Matt Collins
SLB: Terrence Jones
RCB: Simeon Castille, Eric Gray
LCB: Ramzee Robinson
SS: Jeffrey Dukes, Chris Keys
S: Marcus Carter

Lettermen Lost: 10
RDE: Mark Anderson, Stephen Kulback
NT: Rudy Griffin
MLB: Freddie Roach, Juke King
SLB: DeMeco Ryans
RCB: Anthony Madison
SS: Charlie Peprah, Justin Ballard
S: Roman Harper

SPECIAL TEAMS

Lettermen Returning: 1
Starters Returning: 1
PK: Jamie Christensen
Lettermen Lost: 4
P: Jeremy Schatz
PK: Ryan Saxby
H: Matt Miller
SN: Drew Lane

Starters in Bold
Some will change positions in 2006

2006 Tentative SEC Football Schedule

(Dates and Sites Subject to Change - As of February 2006)

Date / Team	Sept. 2	Sept. 9	Sept. 16	Sept. 23	Sept. 30	Oct. 7	Oct. 14	Oct. 21	Oct. 28	Nov. 4	Nov. 11	Nov. 18	Nov. 25
ALABAMA	HAWAII Tuscaloosa	VANDERBILT Tuscaloosa	LOUISIANA-MONROE Tuscaloosa	ARKANSAS Fayetteville	FLORIDA Gainesville	DUKE Tuscaloosa	OLE MISS Tuscaloosa	TENNESSEE Knoxville	FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL Tuscaloosa	MISSISSIPPI STATE Tuscaloosa	LSU Baton Rouge	AUBURN Tuscaloosa	
ARKANSAS	SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA Fayetteville	UTAH STATE Fayetteville	VANDERBILT Nashville	ALABAMA Fayetteville		AUBURN Auburn	SE MISSOURI STATE Fayetteville	OLE MISS Fayetteville	LOUISIANA-MONROE Little Rock	SOUTH CAROLINA Columbia	TENNESSEE Fayetteville	MISSISSIPPI STATE Starkville	LSU Little Rock
AUBURN	WASHINGTON STATE Auburn	MISSISSIPPI STATE Starkville	LSU Auburn	BUFFALO Auburn	SOUTH CAROLINA Columbia (9/28)	ARKANSAS Auburn	FLORIDA Auburn	TULANE Auburn	OLE MISS Oxford	ARKANSAS STATE Auburn	GEORGIA Auburn	ALABAMA Tuscaloosa	
FLORIDA	SOUTHERN MISS Gainesville	CENTRAL FLORIDA Gainesville	TENNESSEE Knoxville	KENTUCKY Gainesville	ALABAMA Gainesville	LSU Gainesville	AUBURN Auburn		GEORGIA Jacksonville	VANDERBILT Nashville	SOUTH CAROLINA Gainesville	WESTERN CAROLINA Gainesville	FLORIDA STATE Tallahassee
GEORGIA	WESTERN KENTUCKY Athens	SOUTH CAROLINA Columbia	UAB Athens	COLORADO Athens	OLE MISS Oxford	TENNESSEE Athens	VANDERBILT Athens	MISSISSIPPI STATE Athens	FLORIDA Jacksonville	KENTUCKY Lexington	AUBURN Auburn		GEORGIA TECH Athens
KENTUCKY	LOUISVILLE Louisville	TEXAS STATE Lexington	OLE MISS Lexington	FLORIDA Gainesville	CENTRAL MICHIGAN Lexington	SOUTH CAROLINA Lexington	LSU Baton Rouge		MISSISSIPPI STATE Starkville	GEORGIA Lexington	VANDERBILT Lexington	LOUISIANA-MONROE Lexington	TENNESSEE Knoxville
LSU	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE Baton Rouge	ARIZONA Baton Rouge	AUBURN Auburn	TULANE Baton Rouge	MISSISSIPPI STATE Baton Rouge	FLORIDA Gainesville	KENTUCKY Baton Rouge	FRESNO STATE Baton Rouge		TENNESSEE Knoxville	ALABAMA Baton Rouge	OLE MISS Baton Rouge	ARKANSAS Little Rock
OLE MISS	MEMPHIS Oxford	MISSOURI Columbia	KENTUCKY Lexington	WAKE FOREST Oxford	GEORGIA Oxford	VANDERBILT Oxford	ALABAMA Tuscaloosa	ARKANSAS Fayetteville	AUBURN Oxford	NORTHWESTERN STATE Oxford		LSU Baton Rouge	MISSISSIPPI STATE Oxford
MISS. STATE	SOUTH CAROLINA Starkville (8/31)	AUBURN Starkville	TULANE Starkville	UAB Birmingham	LSU Baton Rouge	WEST VIRGINIA Starkville	JACKSONVILLE STATE Starkville	GEORGIA Athens	KENTUCKY Starkville	ALABAMA Tuscaloosa		ARKANSAS Starkville	OLE MISS Oxford
SOUTH CAROLINA	MISSISSIPPI STATE Starkville (8/31)	GEORGIA Columbia	WOFFORD Columbia	FLORIDA ATLANTIC Columbia	AUBURN Columbia (9/28)	KENTUCKY Lexington		VANDERBILT Nashville	TENNESSEE Columbia	ARKANSAS Columbia	FLORIDA Gainesville	MIDDLE TENNESSEE Columbia	CLEMSON Clemson
TENNESSEE	CALIFORNIA Knoxville	AIR FORCE Knoxville	FLORIDA Knoxville	MARSHALL Knoxville	MEMPHIS Memphis	GEORGIA Athens		ALABAMA Knoxville	SOUTH CAROLINA Columbia	LSU Knoxville	ARKANSAS Fayetteville	VANDERBILT Nashville	KENTUCKY Knoxville
VANDERBILT	MICHIGAN Ann Arbor	ALABAMA Tuscaloosa	ARKANSAS Nashville	TENNESSEE STATE Nashville	KENT STATE Nashville	OLE MISS Oxford	GEORGIA Athens	SOUTH CAROLINA Nashville	DUKE Durham	FLORIDA Nashville	KENTUCKY Lexington	TENNESSEE Nashville	

2006 SEC CHAMPIONSHIP GAME • DECEMBER 2 • ATLANTA, GA.

By Jess Nicholas

Warriors hope rebuilding efforts are finished

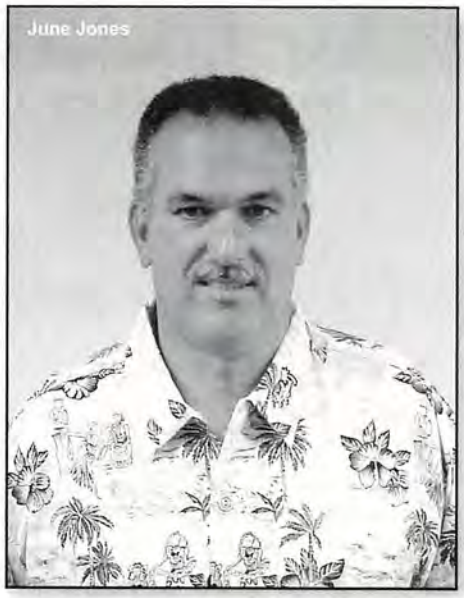
When Alabama last saw Hawaii, the Warriors were helping to put a fitting end to Alabama's disappointing 2003 season with a 37-29 defeat of the Crimson Tide.

Hawaii went on to finish 9-5 in 2003 behind the arm of veteran quarterback Timmy Chang. Chang returned in 2004 to help lead Hawaii to an 8-5 season, a year that saw the Warriors finish second in the nation with 338.6 yards passing per game.

Colt Brennan took over for Chang in 2005, and Hawaii's passing averages went up. Under Brennan, Hawaii threw for 384.3 yards per game, again coming in second in the country. But where it mattered–the scoreboard–Hawaii wasn't as successful. The Warriors, who had to replace 12 starters in 2005, finished 5-7 and missed post-season play.

Brennan is back for his senior year, and Hawaii is hoping its rebuilding efforts are finished, at least offensively. The Warriors return seven starters on the offensive side of the ball.

Up front, Hawaii is strong. Samson Satele will begin his fourth year as a starter, moving from left guard to center. The tackles, Tala Esera and Dane Uperesa, are also fourth-year starters. The starting guards, however, will be new, although Hawaii coaches have been impressed with the spring competition. Marques Kaonohi, Hercules Satele and Larry Sauafea have the most experience, but were being pushed by Keith Ah-Soon, John Estes, Aaron Kia and Laupepe


June Jones

Letuli. Depth is not a problem.

Brennan put up phenomenal numbers in 2005 and is being counted on tfor similar success in 2006. Brennan was 350-of-515 (68 per cent) for 4,301 yards, 35 touchdowns, and 13 interceptions in 2005. With Alabama starting three new defensive backs in this game, the atmosphere figures to be tense, to say the least.

Two returning receivers caught more than 1,000 yards of passes in 2005. Ryan Grice-Mullen and Davone Bess, both freshmen in 2005, combined for 174 receptions for nearly 2,400 yards and 26 TDs. They're back, along with senior Ross Dickerson (51 receptions, 725 yards, 4 TDs) and Chad Mock (42 receptions, 502 yards, 1 TD). The best news for Alabama is that all four players are shorter than 6 feet tall, meaning size matchups won't be an issue.

It's a misconception to say Hawaii doesn't run the ball much. The Warriors just don't use the run as a first option. Last year's top back, Nate Ilaoa, is currently not eligible for 2006, leaving Brennan as the top returning rusher. Brennan, however, only rushed for 154 yards on 99 carries. He is a good scrambler, but not a tremendous rushing threat.

Ilaoa may become eligible for the 2006 season, though, if he can get a sixth year of eligibility from the NCAA. If he can, he's a dangerous runner, and productive (85 carries, 643 yards, 7.6 average, 6 TDs in 2005). If he's not eligible, the job may go to receiver Michael Washington, or to 298-pound bull back Reagan Mauia (12 carries, 59 yards, 4.9 average, 1 TD in 2005).

Defensively, Hawaii is in its second year running a 3-4 defense under defensive coordinator Jerry Glanville. The Warriors are hoping for more consistency than they had last year, but that will be hard to do while replacing seven defensive starters from a year ago.

Hawaii ranked 102nd in total defense, 98th in rush defense, 110th in scoring defense, 91st in pass defense and 108th in pass efficiency defense. There

Continued on Page 82

GAME ONE: HAWAII

Saturday, September 2, Bryant-Denny, Tuscaloosa

Location: Honolulu, Hawaii
Nickname: Warriors
Colors: Green, Black & White
Conference: Western Athletic Conference
Stadium: Aloha Stadium (50,000)
2005 Record: 5-7 (4-4 WAC)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 1-1-0
Head Coach: June Jones (Hawaii, 1974)
Career Record: 53-37, 7 years
Record at Hawaii: 53-37, 7 years
Starters Returning: 13
Offense (7): WR Ryan Grice-Mullen, WR Davone Bess, WR Ross Dickerson, C Samson Satele, T Tala Esera, T Dane Uperesa, QB Colt Brennan
Defense (4): DT Michael Lafele, DT Keala Watson, LB Karl Noa, S Kenny Patton
Specialists (2) P Kurt Milne, PK Dan Perry

2005 Results

September 3	Southern California	63	Hawaii	17
September 10	Michigan State	42	Hawaii	14
September 24	Hawaii	24	Idaho	0
October 1	Boise State	44	Hawaii	41
October 8	Louisana Tech	46	Hawaii	14
October 15	Hawaii	49	New Mexico State	28
October 22	Hawaii	45	San Jose State	38
October 29	Fresno State	27	Hawaii	13
November 5	Nevada	38	Hawaii	28
November 12	Hawaii	50	Utah State	23
November 25	Wisconsin	41	Hawaii	24
December 3	Hawaii	49	San Diego State	38

2006 Schedule

September 2	at ALABAMA
September 16	UNLV
September 23	at Boise State
September 30	Eastern Illinois
October 7	Nevada
October 14	at Fresno State
October 21	at New Mexico State
October 28	Idaho
November 4	at Utah State
November 11	Louisiana Tech
November 18	San Jose State
November 25	Purdue
December 2	Oregon State

By Jess Nicholas

Commodores must make do without Cutler

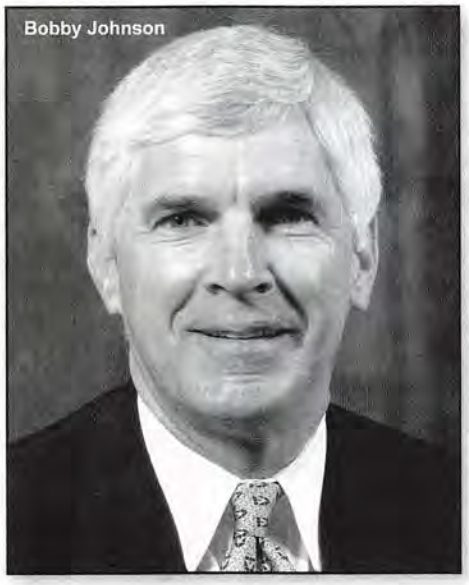
For the past two years, Vanderbilt fans entered the football season dreaming of an elusive bowl appearance.

In 2004, Vandy never got out of the gate. After getting blown out against South Carolina in the opener, the Commodores lost three of their next four games by a total of nine points, and finished the year by losing to Kentucky and Tennessee by a combined six points.

In 2005, things looked much better. Vanderbilt opened with four straight wins before getting upset 17-15 in its fifth game by lowly MTSU. The loss to the Blue Raiders set Vandy reeling, and by the time the Commodores were through, they had lost six games in a row and were left out of the bowl picture. A 28-24 upset win over Tennessee to close the season and knock the cross-state Volunteers out of bowl season was sweet consolation.

Under Bobby Johnson, Vanderbilt is playing sound football and recruiting well. But with five starters on offense and five on defense gone to graduation–and particularly, with quarterback Jay Cutler now plying his trade in the NFL–a challenge for the post-season isn't likely to come in 2006.

With Cutler gone, the most watched Commodores are undoubtedly quarterbacks Chris Nickson and Mackenzi Adams. Both were hurt at times in the spring, and while the competition was close, Nickson is expected to be under center when Vanderbilt opens the season.


Bobby Johnson

When Johnson first arrived at Vanderbilt, his teams did little more than run the football, as Johnson had a strong option background. As he grew to trust Cutler, Vanderbilt moved to a team that often used multiple-receiver sets. Cutler finished with 3,073 yards passing in 2005.

Nickson, the only other quarterback who played, was 1-of-3 for 13 yards on the year.

Cutler was mobile, but Nickson is a true running threat. Although he attempted only three passes last year, he ran 15 times for 49 yards (3.3 avg.). He'll need to learn to stay in the pocket longer and let plays develop. Expect the Commodores offense to be more run-centric while Nickson learns.

Whoever starts under center will have the best Vanderbilt line in perhaps 20 years in front of him. Chris Williams and Brian Stamper are a solid pair of bookends. Mac Pyle is an underrated guard, but he missed the spring with injuries. Merritt Kirchoffer is the likely starter at the other guard slot, and the only real question mark. Josh Eames figures to either take the job from Kirchoffer or be the swing guard once Pyle returns. Hamilton Holliday should be fine at center.

Vandy figures to have its deepest collection of running backs in years. Cassen Jackson-Garrison looks like the likely starter at tailback, ahead of Jeff Jennings and Jared Hawkins, the latter looking like a star in the making. Darnell Martemus gives the Commodores depth behind fullback Steven Bright, a smart, solid player.

Wide receiver is deep, with Earl Bennett and Marlon White anchoring the position. Bennett, an Alabama product, broke onto the scene last year and could be one of the conference's best receivers. George Smith and Bryant Anderson are the top reserves, with redshirt freshman Alex Washington drawing raves in the spring. Sean Walker and Justin Wheeler are also in the mix.

Replacing Dustin Dunning at tight end will be tough. Brad Allen leads a group that lacks experience.

Continued on Page 82

GAME TWO: VANDERBILT

Saturday, September 9, Bryant-Denny, Tuscaloosa

Location: Nashville, Tennessee
Nickname: Commodores
Colors: Black & Gold
Conference: Southeastern
Stadium: Dudley Field/Vanderbilt Stadium (39,733)
2005 Record: 5-6 (3-5 SEC East)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 19-57-4
Head Coach: Bobby Johnson (Clemson, 1972)
Career Record: 71-71-0, 12 years
Record at Vanderbilt: 11-35, 4 years
Starters Returning: 13
Offense (6): WR Earl Bennett, T Brian Stamper, G Mac Pyle, G Josh Eames, FB Steven Bright, RB Cassen Jackson-Garrison
Defense (6): DT Ray Brown, DE Chris Booker, MLB Jonathan Goff, OLB Kevin Joyce, S Reshard Langford, CB Sean Dixon
Specialists (1): P/PK Bryant Hahnfeldt

2005 Results

September 1	Vanderbilt	24	Wake Forest	20
September 10	Vanderbilt	28	Arkansas	24
September 17	Vanderbilt	31	Ole Miss	23
September 24	Vanderbilt	37	Richmond	13
October 1	MTSU	17	Vanderbilt	15
October 8	LSU	34	Vanderbilt	6
October 15	Georgia	34	Vanderbilt	17
October 22	South Carolina	35	Vanderbilt	28
November 5	Florida	49	Vanderbilt	42 (2OT)
November 12	Kentucky	48	Vanderbilt	43
November 19	Vanderbilt	28	Tennessee	24

2006 Schedule

September 2	at Michigan
September 9	at ALABAMA
September 16	Arkansas
September 23	Tennessee State
September 30	Kent State
October 7	at Ole Miss
October 14	at Georgia
October 21	South Carolina
October 28	at Duke
November 4	Florida
November 11	at Kentucky
November 18	Tennessee

By Jess Nicholas

ULM getting better, but not there yet

There was little doubt when Alabama scheduled a game against Louisiana-Monroe that the Crimson Tide was eyeing this game as a weekend to get healthy and not have to play at quite the same pitch as an SEC game.

That was before the 2005 season went into the books, and Louisiana-Monroe–typically a doormat's doormat in Division-IA–nearly won the Sun Belt title and finished within a game of being bowl-eligible.

But much of the strength of the offense was packaged in one Steven Jyles, ULM's do-everything quarterback. Jyles is now trying to continue his career north of the border in the CFL.

Along with Jyles, ULM is replacing five of its front six on defense, as well as its punter and three of Jyles, offensive teammates.

New quarterback Kinsmon Lancaster figures to be even more elusive than Jyles was, but he hasn't proven to be much of a passer. Lancaster was 7-of-24 (29.2 per cent) for 54 yards, 0 TD and 1 interception in 2005, but as a running back, he carried 55 times for 232 yards (4.2 average) and 1 TD. He also caught 9 passes for 62 yards (6.9 average). Size isn't Lancaster's long suit; he's 5-11 and weighs only 182 pounds.

Three other players competed for the job in the spring, with Army transfer Chance Payne the most likely candidate to emerge as a contender in the fall.

Louisiana-Monroe finished 77th in total offense in 2005, but was well-balanced, ranking 67th in rushing offense and 73rd in passing offense. The team's basic set is a one-back spread attack with a tight end, but the Indians–or the Warhawks, depending on whether the team's NCAA-mandated name change takes effect this year or next–will play four-wide much of the time. Last year's top receiver, Drouzon Quillen, caught 45 passes for 707 yards and 9 TDs, but declared for the NFL draft a year early. The second-leading receiver, Joey Trappey, graduated, leaving sophomore Marty Humphrey (20 catches, 269 yards, 13.5 average, 0 TD) as the leading returning receiver. Joe Merritt and Adam Hogan, who combined for only 17 receptions in 2005, are listed as the other two starters. RoShon Jacobs could also push for a spot. Depth is sketchy, with the rest of the roster combining for 1 catch for minus-6 yards. New tight end Mitch Doyle has yet to catch a pass.

Charlie Weatherbie

Things are in similar shape in the offensive backfield, where top reserve running back Mason Denham graduated. But sophomore Calvin Dawson (135 carries, 666 yards, 4.9 average, 7 TDs) returns, although he missed spring work with an injury and his status is uncertain for the fall. Experience is at a premium among the backups; only Leo Colquitt had any rushing stats last year. Erroll Hogan, former safety Chris Freeman, and signee Tay Ogletree will compete for playing time in the fall.

One place where ULM won't have any questions is the offensive line, where all five 2005 starters return. Undersized Brent Gregston mans the middle, with Aaron Shultz and Adam Hill at guard. Both missed spring, though, giving the curiously named Joseph Joseph a chance to compete. Larry Shappley and Kyle Cunningham are the tackles, but both are on the small side.

Defensively, ULM must replace the entire defensive line, including three multi-year starters. Christiaan Cambridge has experience at defensive end and should give ULM a seamless transition on

Continued on Page 82

GAME THREE: LOUISIANA-MONROE

Saturday, September 16, Bryant-Denny, Tucaloosa

Location: Monroe, Louisiana
Nickname: Indians/Warhawks
Colors: Garnet & Gold
Conference: Sun Belt
Stadium: Malone Stadium (30,427)
2005 Record: 5-6 (4-1 Sun Belt)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 0-0
Head Coach: Charlie Weatherbie (Oklahoma State, 1977)
Career Record: 56-87, 13 years
Record at Louisiana-Monroe: 11-23, 4 years
Starters Returning: 12
Offense (7): WR Marty Humphrey, RB Calvin Dawson, C Brent Gregston, G Aaron Shultz, G Adam Hill, T Larry Shappley, T Kyle Cunningham
Defense (4): LB Harry Bradley, S Kevin Payne, CB Chaz Williams, S Jared Frost
Specialists (1): PK Ragan Walters

2005 Results

September 1	Northwestern State	27	La.-Monroe	23
September 10	Wyoming	38	La.-Monroe	0
September 17	Georgia	44	La.-Monroe	7
September 22	La.-Monroe	28	Florida Atlantic	21
October 1	La.-Monroe	31	Arkansas State	27
October 8	Arkansas	44	La.-Monroe	15
October 15	La.-Monroe	27	Troy	3
November 5	Florida International	31	La.-Monroe	29
November 12	La.-Monroe	34	MTSU	31
November 19	La.-Monroe	24	North Texas	19
November 26	La.-Lafayette	54	La.-Monroe	21

2006 Schedule

September 2	Alcorn State
September 9	at Kansas
September 16	at ALABAMA
September 30	Florida Atlantic
October 7	at Arkansas State
October 14	at Troy
October 21	MTSU
October 28	at Arkansas
November 11	at Florida International
November 18	at Kentucky
November 25	North Texas
December 2	at La.-Lafayette

By Jess Nicholas

What will those Hogs look like?

When Alabama travels to Arkansas for its first road game of the season, it will have more than just the usual Razorback distractions to deal with. Not only is Fayetteville, Arkansas, a tough place to play, Alabama will be flying somewhat blind when it gets there.

Following a dismal, but not unexpected 4-7 season, Arkansas Head Coach Houston Nutt made changes to his offensive staff that many considered to be panic-induced and fueled by the reality that Nutt's tenure in Arkansas was in danger. Most notably, Arkansas fired quarterback coach Roy Wittke and replaced him with legendary Arkansas high school coach Gus Mulzahn.

Although Mulzahn won't be calling the plays exclusively–there's now a passing game coordinator, Alex Wood, to go along with offensive coordinator Mulzahn, and Nutt has been known to prefer to direct his own offense–his influence will be felt.

Curiously, Nutt is taking his offense to the air even while the Razorbacks return the best set of running backs in college football. Combo back Peyton Hillis, who will likely start at fullback this year, will clear the way for the super tailback combination of Darren McFadden and Felix Jones. Hillis is also a stellar runner and receiver in his own right. The three combined for more than 2,000 yards rushing and 17 touchdowns in 2005.

With Mulzahn came his star high school pupil, quarterback Mitch Mustain. While Arkansas returns

Houston Nutt

three experienced quarterbacks in 2006, one has to wonder how long it will be before Mustain gets a shot. The biggest wonder of all, though, is how much of Mulzahn's preferred spread offense gets integrated with Nutt's conservative I-based attack.

If Arkansas opts for a passing offense, and Mustain is redshirted, the question then becomes which of the existing Razorback quarterbacks to pick.

Casey Dick took over the job midway through the 2005 season and finished solidly, going 53-for-99 (53.5 per cent) for 584 yards, 7 touchdowns and 4 interceptions. Although Robert Johnson, the season's original starter, completed a higher percentage of his passes (56.3), Johnson threw for more interceptions than touchdowns and was very erratic in directing the offense. In between Dick and Johnson, Arkansas gave Alex Mortensen a tryout, but the weak-armed Mortensen managed poor numbers (6-of-17, 35.3 per cent, 63 yards, 1 TD, 2 interceptions) before getting benched. In the spring, Dick and Johnson both looked improved, while Mortensen was buried on the scout team.

Whoever gets the call under center will have a talented receiving corps with which to work. Marcus Monk is perhaps the most feared wide receiver in the SEC this year, with 6-6 height to go along with great speed and hands. Steady Cedric Washington, a senior, gives the Razorbacks a good starting pair. Mason Templeton gets the call at tight end, and he has experience. If Arkansas' spring game was any indication, the backs will get plenty of catches. Depth at wideout is good, with Chris Baker, Cedric Logan and Rod Coleman certain to get a lot of time.

The offensive line is veteran, with Zac Tubbs and Nate Garner at the tackles, Stephen Parker and Robert Felton at the guards and Jonathan Luigs the new center. Only Luigs is a question mark, although Tubbs needs to show he can stay healthy.

For all the hand-wringing over the offense, though, it was the Arkansas defense that has been

Continued on Page 82

GAME FOUR: At ARKANSAS

Saturday, September 23, Reynolds-Razorback , Fayetteville

Location: Fayetteville, Ark.
Nickname: Razorbacks
Colors: Cardinal & White
Conference: Southeastern
Stadium: Donald W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium (80,000)
2005 Record: 4-7 (2-6 SEC West)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 6-10-0
Head Coach: Houston Nutt (Oklahoma State, 1981)
Career Record: 93-62-0, 12 years
Record at Arkansas: 57-40-0, 7 years
Starters Returning: 15
Offense (8): WR Marcus Monk, WR Cedric Washington, G Stephen Parker, G Robert Felton, T Zac Tubbs, QB Casey Dick, FB Peyton Hillis, RB Darren McFadden
Defense (6): DE Jamal Anderson, DT Ernest Mitchell, DT Keith Jackson, OLB Sam Olajubutu, CB Michael Coe, S Randy Kelly
Specialists (1): P Jacob Skinner

2005 Results

September 3	Arkansas	49	Missouri State	17
September 10	Vanderbilt	28	Arkansas	24
September 17	Southern California	70	Arkansas	17
September 24	Alabama	24	Arkansas	13
October 8	Arkansas	44	La.-Monroe	15
October 15	Auburn	34	Arkansas	17
October 22	Georgia	23	Arkansas	20
November 5	South Carolina	14	Arkansas	10
November 12	Arkansas	28	Ole Miss	17
November 19	Arkansas	44	Mississippi State	10
November 25	LSU	19	Arkansas	17

2006 Schedule

September 2	Southern California
September 9	Utah State
September 16	at Vanderbilt
September 23	ALABAMA
October 7	at Auburn
October 14	SE Missouri State
October 21	Ole Miss
October 28	La.-Monroe (Little Rock, Ark.)
November 4	at South Carolina
November 11	Tennessee
November 18	at Mississippi State
November 24	LSU (Little Rock, Ark.)

By Jess Nicholas

Florida will be looking for revenge

Until Tyrone Prothro went down in the waning minutes of Alabama's 31-3 destruction of Florida in 2005, there wasn't a moment of the game, from the opening snap on, that wasn't deliciously sweet for Alabama.

Florida, media darlings for many years already, had become twice as beloved after Head Coach Urban Meyer arrived on the scene with his spread-option offense and love for high expectations–as well as, perhaps, his own accomplishments. Following the loss to Alabama, Meyer's team never really looked comfortable again, with the exception of its November 26 contest with rival Florida State, which the Gators won handily, 34-7.

The lust for revenge against Alabama was plainly present on Meyer's face after the game, and most Gator fans have September 30 circled on this year's calendar.

Expectations remain high in Gainesville, due mostly to the return of quarterback Chris Leak, a plethora of offensive skill players, and the nucleus of what could be a stout defense. (That doesn't even include the nation's number one recruiting class.) But Florida must replace four-fifths of its offensive line, as well as find more consistency in its pass rush. And, Florida must answer once and for all whether the spread-option can win in the SEC.

Part of the problem with the offense, which finished the 2005 season ranked 61st in Division-IA, is that it doesn't fit the talents of its best player, Leak.

Urban Meyer

Chris Leak is not a scrambler by nature, yet the offense is built first with the option in mind. Still, Leak put up good numbers in 2005 (235-of-374, 62.8 per cent, 2,639 yards, 20 TDs, 6 interceptions) and figures to be at least above average in 2006.

The biggest question is who will protect him. Senior Steve Rissler is the lone returning starter on the offensive line. He'll draw the right guard assignment. Opposite him is Jim Tartt, who was the top line reserve in 2005, so the guard positions at least have experience.

The rest are up for grabs. Rissler could move to center; if he does, redshirt freshman Simon Codrington will start at right guard. The tackles figure to be Jason Watkins and Phil Trautwein, although Kyle Newell will compete. Eddie Haupt is the other center candidate.

The wide receiver corps took a big blow when Chris Jackson opted for the NFL draft, but Florida will probably get Andre Caldwell back from injury, which will help even things out. Jermalle Cornelius and Dallas Baker are the go-to guys at the moment, with help from Kenneth Tookes and Mike McIntosh. Louis Murphy and Nyan Boateng provide depth. The wild card is converted quarterback Cornelius Ingram, who is also in the mix at tight end. Tate Casey figures to be the starter at tight end, and he is one of the best in the conference.

Running back has gobs of talent, but little proven winning ability. DeShawn Wynn can be as good as he wants to be, but lacks a tough streak. Markus Manson has speed to burn, but has been soft between the tackles. Kestahn Moore could wind up being the running back to watch. He averaged 5.8 yards per carry in 2005 and perhaps most importantly, has seemed to avoid Meyer's dog house so far.

Florida won't use a fullback often, but when it does, Billy Latsko will get the call. He's not a rushing threat.

Defensively, the Gators will be tough up the

Continued on Page 83

GAME FIVE: At FLORIDA

Saturday, September 30, Ben Hill Griffin, Gainesville

Location: Gainesville, Florida
Nickname: Gators
Colors: Blue & Orange
Conference: Southeastern
Stadium: Ben Hill Griffin Stadium at Florida Field (88,548)
2005 Record: 9-3 (5-3 SEC East)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 12-20-0
Head Coach: Urban Meyer (Cincinnati, 1986)
Career Record: 48-11, 5 years
Record at Florida: 9-3, 1 year
Starters Returning: 14
Offense (6): WR Andre Caldwell, WR Jermalle Cornelius, G Steve Rissler, TE Tate Casey, RB DeShawn Wynn, QB Chris Leak
Defense (6): E Joe Cohen, T Ray McDonald, T Marcus Thomas, LB Earl Everett, LB Brandon Siler, S Kyle Jackson
Specialists (2): PK Chris Hetland, P Eric Wilbur

2005 Results

September 3	Florida	32	Wyoming	14
September 10	Florida	41	Louisiana Tech	3
September 17	Florida	16	Tennessee	7
September 24	Florida	49	Kentucky	28
October 1	Alabama	31	Florida	3
October 8	Florida	35	Mississippi State	9
October 15	LSU	21	Florida	17
October 29	Florida	14	Georgia	10
November 5	Florida	49	Vanderbilt	42 (2OT)
November 12	South Carolina	30	Vanderbilt	22
November 26	Florida	34	Florida State	7
January 2 (Outback Bowl)	Florida	31	Iowa	24

2006 Schedule

September 2	Southern Miss
September 9	Central Florida
September 16	at Tennessee
September 23	Kentucky
September 30	ALABAMA
October 7	LSU
October 14	at Auburn
October 28	Georgia (Jacksonville, Fla.)
November 4	at Vanderbilt
November 11	South Carolina
November 18	Western Carolina
November 25	Florida State

By Jess Nicholas

Blue Devils having a devil of a time winning

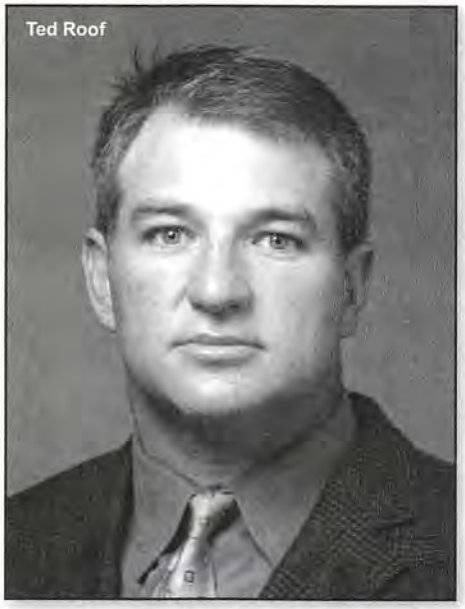
When Ted Roof was named interim coach at Duke towards the end of the 2003 season–and went 2-3 in the final five games, including wins over Georgia Tech and North Carolina and near upsets of North Carolina State and Tennessee–optimism started to build for the Blue Devils faithful, who have little to cheer about in any sport not involving an inflatable ball that is large and round rather than medium-sized and oblong-shaped.

But things haven't gone as planned for Roof. Since that near-magical–by Duke's standards– 2-3 start, Roof's charges have gone 3-19 and now Roof finds himself on the hot seat.

When Roof took over in 2003, Duke was basically a run-only team. Roof moved to a spread look in 2004, but in 2005 gravitated back towards the run. The Blue Devils are now a pro-set team, but they finished 116th out of 119 Division IA teams in total offense in 2005 and did nothing well.

In 2006, Roof is fighting for his job, and the Blue Devils are fighting for respectability. Against Alabama, they'll be fighting uphill against a major talent gap.

Quarterback is unsettled at the moment, with a pair of sophomores, Zack Asack and Marcus Jones, battling for the job. Once heralded recruit Thaddeus Lewis arrives in the fall, however, Asack and Jones may be battling for the right to be called Lewis, top backup. Whoever wins the job will be mobile, and Jones has impressive size (6-3, 220 pounds) to go with a strong arm and good speed. But Asack has the experience, going 90-for-180 (50.0 per cent) for 966 yards, 5 TDs and 8 interceptions in 2005.


Ted Roof

At running back, Justin Boyle (134 carries, 458 yards, 3.4 average, 9 TDs) returns, but all eyes are on Ronnie Drummer, who put up eye-popping stats in 2005 in limited work (33 carries, 337 yards, 10.2 average, 2 TDs). Clifford Harris and Requan Boyette provide depth. At fullback, Tielor Robinson is a load at nearly 235 pounds and a capable blocker.

Sophomore Eron Riley (11 catches, 247 yards, 22.5 average, 2 TDs) is the leading returning receiver, with Deon Adams and Jomar Wright the only other two players with experience. Depth will hurt Duke here. Raphael Chestnut, who caught only 2 passes for 12 yards last year, is being counted on heavily for production in the fall. Starting tight end Ben Patrick returns, and his 30 receptions in 2005 led the team by far. But he averaged less than 10 yards per catch. All of the above must play more physical football in 2006, which has been a problem for Duke receivers for years.

The offensive line is a mess, and Duke could be starting as many as three true freshmen by the time the team visits Tuscaloosa. Matt Rumsey returns at center, while sophomore Fred Roland figures to hold down the left tackle slot. After that, it's anyone's guess. Guard Garrett Mason figures to fit in somewhere, with Rob Schirmann, Danny Bowling, Cameron Goldberg, Zach Maurides and massive Ben Loebner trying to hold off a batch of signees, highlighted by Jarrod Holt and Robert Drum.

Defensively, though, Duke figures to be sound. Duke was 89th in total defense in 2006, but those numbers are expected to improve as nine starters return.

The line figures to be solid, with tackle Vince Oghobaase–who could play for Alabama or any other SEC team–and end Ayanga Okpokowuruk anchoring things. Casey Camero draws the other tackle assignment, with Eli Nichols at the other end. Justin Kitchen and Christopher

Continued on Page 83

GAME SIX: DUKE

Saturday, October 7, Bryant-Denny, Tuscaloosa

Location: Durham, North Carolina
Nickname: Blue Devils
Colors: Blue & White
Conference: Atlantic Coast
Stadium: Wallace Wade Stadium (35,000)
2005 Record: 1-10 (0-8 ACC Coastal)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 1-1
Head Coach: Ted Roof (Georgia Tech, 1987)
Career Record: 5-22, 3 years
Career at Duke: 5-22, 3 years
Starters Returning: 12
Offense (3): RB Justin Boyle, TE Ben Patrick, C Matt Rumsey
Defense (8): E Ayanga Okpokowuruk, E Eli Nichols, T Casey Camero, MLB Patrick Bailey, OLB Michael Tauiliili, CB John Talley, CB Deonto McCormick, SS Chris Davis
Specialists (1): PK Joe Surgan

2005 Results

September 3	East Carolina	24	Duke	21
September 10	Virginia Tech	45	Duke	0
September 17	Duke	40	VMI	14
September 24	Virginia	38	Duke	7
October 1	Navy	28	Duke	21
October 8	Miami (Fla.)	52	Duke	7
October 15	Georgia Tech	35	Duke	10
October 22	Florida State	55	Duke	24
October 29	Wake Forest	44	Duke	6
November 5	Clemson	49	Duke	20
November 19	North Carolina	24	Duke	21

2006 Schedule

September 2	Richmond
September 9	at Wake Forest
September 16	at Virginia Tech
September 30	Virginia
October 7	at ALABAMA
October 14	Florida State
October 21	Miami (Fla.)
October 28	Vanderbilt
November 4	Navy
November 11	at Boston College
November 18	at Georgia Tech
November 25	North Carolina

By Jess Nicholas

Rebels have an uphill battle

Ole Miss didn't beat Alabama in 2005, but the consensus was that the Rebels showed better teams how to play the Crimson Tide. Mississippi used a power running game and a sharp defensive game plan to hold Alabama to just 13 points, and Bama needed a last-second field goal from Jamie Christensen to win the game.

But that was 2005, and even though Ole Miss made strides under first-year head coach Ed Orgeron, graduation, and a few defections threaten to turn 2006 into a much-too-early rebuilding year for Coach O.

The biggest problem Ole Miss will have is most certainly quarterback. Micheal Spurlock graduated, one-time "quarterback of the future" Robert Lane is now a tight end, and Ethan Flatt elected not to return for his senior season. That left the job in the spring to such names as Seth Adams, Billy Tapp and Connor Wise–and none of them is expected to be under center for the first game.

That honor figures to fall to Brent Schaeffer, who began his career with Tennessee before quitting the team amidst off-field trouble and transferring down to a junior college. Despite his troubles, Schaeffer had his pick of several schools last spring and chose the Rebels, who are salivating over his rare combination of speed, a cannon arm, and a calm field demeanor. The only questions in most Rebels fans, minds are the same as for any expected newcomer–will he arrive; and if he does, will he be in shape without much rust to shake off?

Ed Orgeron

When Schaeffer–or whoever wins the job–steps under center, he'll do so with a lot of question marks in front and to the side of him. Graduation claimed star tackles Bobby Harris and Tre Stallings, along with center Tony Bonds and basically the entire receiving corps.

To gauge how bad things are at wideout, Lane–who didn't switch from quarterback until the second half of the season–is still the leading returning receiver (17 catches, 213 yards, 12.5 average, 1 TD). In fact, the top returning player who is actually a wide receiver is Carlos Suggs Jr., who had 1 catch for 0 yards in 2006.

Somewhat curiously, Ole Miss plans to run three wideouts a lot in 2006, despite the lack of experience. Mike Wallace and Michael Hicks are expected to be the starters. Neither has any experience, but Hicks has a lot of size (6-3, 220 pounds) and promise. Marshay Green, a small, slot-type receiver, is number three in the rotation, followed by Suggs and converted tight end Keith Houston, who caught 1 pass for 32 yards in 2005. Lane will compete with Robert Hough for playing time at tight end, but Ole Miss wants Lawrence Lilly to grab that position. Even if he does, though, there isn't an above-average blocker in the bunch.

The offensive line is now in the hands of former Miami coach Art Kehoe, so technique won't be an issue.

Talent, however, will.

Michael Oher will get the left tackle assignment whether he's ready for it or not. Oher is by far the best prospect on the Rebels roster, but is probably a year away from being a good SEC player. Darryl Harris slides from left guard to right tackle in 2006. He doesn't have ideal tackle size, but his experience will help him. Andrew Wicker, who will start at left guard, is the last of the truly experienced players to choose from, although new center Thomas Eckers has playing experience as

Continued on Page 83

GAME SEVEN: OLE MISS

Saturday, October 14, Bryant-Denny, Tuscaloosa

Location: Oxford, Mississippi
Nickname: Rebels
Colors: Cardinal Red & Navy Blue
Conference: Southeastern
Stadium: Vaught-Hemingway (60,580)
2005 Record: 3-8 (1-7 SEC West)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 9-42-2
Head Coach: Ed Orgeron (Northwestern State, 1984)
Career Record: 3-8, 1 year
Record at Ole Miss: 3-8, 1 year
Starters Returning: 11
Offense (3): T Darryl Harris, G Andrew Wicker, FB Jason Cook
Defense (6): E Chris Bowers, MLB Patrick Willis, OLB Garry Pack, CB Trumaine McBride, SS Jamarca Sanford, S Charles Clark
Specialists (2): PK Will Moseley, P Rob Park

2005 Results

September 5	Ole Miss	10	Memphis	6
September 17	Vanderbilt	31	Ole Miss	23
September 24	Wyoming	24	Ole Miss	14
October 1	Tennessee	27	Ole Miss	10
October 8	Ole Miss	27	The Citadel	7
October 15	Alabama	13	Ole Miss	10
October 22	Ole Miss	13	Kentucky	7
October 29	Auburn	27	Ole Miss	3
November 12	Arkansas	28	Ole Miss	17
November 19	LSU	40	Ole Miss	7
November 26	Mississippi State	35	Ole Miss	14

2006 Schedule

September 2	Memphis
September 9	at Missouri
September 16	at Kentucky
September 23	Wake Forest
September 30	Georgia
October 7	Vanderbilt
October 14	at ALABAMA
October 21	at Arkansas
October 28	Auburn
November 4	Northwestern State
November 18	at LSU
November 26	Mississippi State

By Jess Nicholas

Vols need confidence, direction

It was probably the sweetest ending Alabama could have scripted, as Roman Harper's hit took away almost sure Tennessee points and Jamie Christensen knocked through a field goal in the waning seconds for Bama to slip by the Vols 6-3 last year in Tuscaloosa.

Just about as sweet for some Alabama fans was the way the Tennessee season ended–a 28-24 loss to Vanderbilt in the season's penultimate week, a loss that knocked the Volunteers out of the post-season.

Over the off-season, Tennessee head coach Phil Fulmer made some big changes, the most visible being the fire-hire at offensive coordinator. Randy Sanders is out, and David Cutcliffe is back in. Tennessee fans are hoping for all they're worth that Cutcliffe's return means a return to the glory days of a decade ago.

Before that can happen, though, the Tennessee players will need confidence and direction–two things they badly lacked in 2005.

It starts at quarterback, where Fulmer needs to pick one player and stick with him. Junior Erik Ainge spent 2004 splitting time with Brent Schaeffer and 2005 splitting time with Rick Clausen. He looks to be the only man for the job in 2006, but Fulmer has already dropped hints that redshirt freshman Jonathan Crompton could play a big role in the offense in the fall.

The offense doesn't figure to change much from what it was under Sanders–Sanders, after all, was taught by Cutcliffe–but the passing game should be tighter and the running game more about power than finesse.

Phillip Fulmer

One thing Ainge won't have to worry about is a strong running game, provided Arian Foster is recovered from an ankle injury that caused him to miss the spring. Foster (183 carries, 879 yards, 4.8 average, 5 TDs) actually outplayed the far-more-hyped Gerald Riggs Jr. in 2005. Behind Foster is a deep collection of former prep standouts, but it is former walk-on David Yancey who might be the top backup. Others available include Montario Hardesty, LeMarcus Coker and Ja,Kouri Williams. Senior Cory Anderson, a three-year letterman, returns to start at fullback.

The offensive line will need some attention, because combined with what graduation took away, the lack of confidence in the remaining players on the roster is substantial. Arron Sears gets the call at left tackle and is the undisputed leader of this group. Tennessee would love for Josh McNeil to claim the center position, but right now he backs up a walk-on, Michael Frogg. Anthony Parker figures to be the starter at one of the guard slots, with Malcolm Voltaire Rawls and David Ligon fighting for the other spot. Across from Sears, Ramon Foster could be the breakout player Tennessee needs at right tackle. Eric Young is his primary competition.

Wide receiver shouldn't be a spot full of questions, but it is. Robert Meachem had a strong spring that followed a disastrous 2005 season. Jayson Swain and Bret Smith figure to fight for the other slot, with Josh Briscoe providing depth. But the good news largely stops there, and Tennessee is looking at as many as three defensive backs as candidates to play both ways. Demetrice Morley tops that list. Chris Brown returns at tight end, with the Cottam brothers there to back him up.

Defensively, Tennessee is in a numbers crunch up front. Turk McBride and Justin Harrell will start inside, with Demonte Bolden, Dan Williams and Vladmir Richard the top backups. But depth pretty much ends there, and J.T. Mapu, who is just back with the team after going on a Mormon mission, might have to play in 2006 rather than redshirt and bulk up. A walk-on,

Continued on Page 83

GAME EIGHT: At TENNESSEE

Saturday, October 21, Neyland, Knoxville

Location: Knoxville, Tennessee
Nickname: Volunteers
Colors: Orange & White
Conference: Southeastern
Stadium: Neyland Stadium (104,079)
2005 Record: 5-6 (3-5 SEC East)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 37-44-7
Head Coach: Phillip Fulmer (Tennessee, 1972)
Career Record: 128-37, 14 years
Record at Tennessee: 128-37, 14 years
Starters Returning: 10
Offense (4): FB Cory Anderson, TE Chris Brown, WR Jayson Swain, T Arron Sears
Defense (4): T Justin Harrell, S Jonathan Hefney, CB Jonathan Wade, S Antwan Stewart
Specialists (2): PK James Wilhoit, P Britton Colquitt

2005 Results

September 3	Tennessee	17	UAB	10
September 17	Florida	16	Tennessee	7
September 26	Tennessee	30	LSU	27 (OT)
October 1	Tennessee	27	Mississippi	10
October 8	Georgia	27	Tennessee	14
October 22	Alabama	6	Tennessee	3
October 29	South Carolina	16	Tennessee	15
November 5	Notre Dame	41	Tennessee	21
November 12	Tennessee	20	Memphis	16
November 19	Vanderbilt	28	Tennessee	24
November 26	Tennessee	27	Kentucky	8

2006 Schedule

September 2	California
September 9	Air Force
September 16	Florida
September 23	Marshall
September 30	at Memphis
October 7	at Georgia
October 21	ALABAMA
October 28	at South Carolina
November 4	LSU
November 11	at Arkansas
November 18	at Vanderbilt
November 25	Kentucky

By Jess Nicholas

Homecoming won't be happy for FIU

Prior to the 2005 season, one pre-season magazine ranked the Florida International Golden Panthers 119th out of 119 teams playing Division IA football. Once the season got going, FIU did much better than expected. The Golden Panthers finished 5-6, including wins over Louisiana-Monroe and MTSU.

But at the end of the year, FIU lost 12 starters, and is in for its first rebuilding effort conducted at the Division IA level.

Head coach Don Strock has built a strong foundation for his program. The Golden Panthers run a pro-set offense and a basic 4-3 defense, instead of the gimmick schemes that fledgling programs often opt to use. And when FIU comes to Tuscaloosa, they'll bring with them an offense with some real punch.

Josh Padrick is a three-year starter at quarterback and has already logged three 2,000-yard seasons. In 2005, Padrick went 221-for-366 (60.4 per cent) for 2,461 yards, 13 TDs and 11 interceptions. At 6-3 and 210, he has good size and will stand strong in the pocket.

Top receiver Chandler Williams also returns, and brings with him 61 receptions for 870 yards (14.3 average) and 2 TDs in 2005. But Williams, at 5-11 and 180 pounds, is the largest of any FIU receiver with experience and is the only returning receiver with decent statistics to his credit. Reggie Thompson (2 receptions, 25 yards, 12.5 average, 0 TD) and Sanchez Anderson (3 receptions, 28 yards, 9.3 average, 1 TD) will compete with redshirt freshman Vergus Mock for the other starting position. The rest of the depth will be provided by signees.

Don Strock

Tight end is in good hands with Samuel Smith (35 receptions, 302 yards, 8.6 average, 1 TD), a second-team all-conference selection in 2005, and backup Moses Hinton (15 receptions, 188 yards, 12.5 average, 1 TD). Obviously, FIU will use the tight end in its passing game.

Second-leading rusher A,mod Ned (88 carries, 375 yards, 4.3 average, 3 TDs) returns, but he is small (5-8, 170 pounds) and will need plenty of help from Julian Reams (87 carries, 322 yards, 3.7 average, 0 TD) to spell him. Reams has good size, but questionable speed. Marcus Jones II appears to be the fullback in waiting, but he was a non-factor in 2005.

The offensive line lost four starters from the 2005 team and will be the biggest question mark heading into 2006. Guard Ronnie Silva, a load at 350 pounds, is the lone returning starter. He'll start at right guard opposite Mike Alvarez. Alvarez and new center Xavier Shannon are small for college linemen, each struggling to break the six-foot mark. David Bailey and Dustin Gibson appear to be the leading candidates to start at tackle, with Danny Muy, once recruited by Alabama, a possibility to play at any of three or four positions. Junior college transfer Jeff Eugene will compete as well.

Defensively, FIU lost a lot up front. Two starters (Pedro Farias, Brandon Higdon) are gone, along with top reserves Nick Carreno, Terrance Allen and Shaun Dudney. Antwan Barnes and Myron Acoff return as starting ends, but both hover at around just 230 pounds. Barnes, however, is on the Lombardi watch list and can rush the passer very well.

In the middle, FIU plans to go with Reginald Jones and Jonas Murrell. Jones, even though he is listed as a tackle, would be smaller than any of Alabama's defensive ends. Jarvis Pennerton and a handful of signees are expected to provide depth.

The news doesn't get much better at linebacker,

Continued on Page 84

GAME NINE: FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL

Saturday, October 28, Bryant-Denny, Tuscaloosa

Location: Miami, Florida
Nickname: Golden Panthers
Colors: Blue & Gold
Conference: Sun Belt
Stadium: FIU Stadium (17,000)
2005 Record: 5-6 (3-4 Sun Belt)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 0-0
Head Coach: Don Strock (Virginia Tech, 1973)
Career Record: 15-29, 4 years
Record at Florida International: 15-29, 4 years
Starters Returning: 10
Offense (4): QB Josh Padrick, WR Chandler Williams, TE Samuel Smith, G Ronnie Silva
Defense (5): E Antwan Barnes, E Myron Acoff, MLB Keyonvis Boule, SS Chris Smith, CB Lionell Singleton
Specialists (1): P/PK Chris Patullo

2005 Results

September 3	Kansas State	35	Florida International	21
September 10	Texas Tech	56	Florida International	3
September 24	Arkansas State	66	Florida International	24
October 1	Florida International	23	Florida A&M	6
October 15	North Texas	13	Florida International	10
October 20	Troy	18	Florida International	13
November 5	Florida International	31	La.-Monroe	29
November 12	La.-Lafayette	28	Florida International	7
November 19	Florida International	38	Western Kentucky	35
November 26	Florida International	52	Florida Atlantic	6
December 3	Florida International	35	MTSU	31

2006 Schedule

August 31	at MTSU
September 9	at South Florida
September 16	Bowling Green
September 23	at Maryland
September 30	Arkansas State
October 14	at Miami (Fla.)
October 21	at North Texas
October 28	at ALABAMA
November 4	La.-Monroe
November 18	La.-Lafayette
November 25	at Florida Atlantic
December 2	Troy

By Jess Nicholas

Bulldogs need to start showing Improvement

To say it would be big news in Starkville for the Sylvester Croom-led Bulldogs to beat Alabama is like saying people would notice if aliens from Mars landed in the middle of rush hour traffic in New York City and stormed David Letterman's TV show.

Ever since Croom was hired at Mississippi State, he has coached every minute with at least one eye cast towards his alma mater in Tuscaloosa. Following a 2006 spring football session that was equal parts uplifting and crushing, it remains to be seen whether the Bulldogs can pull off a win over the Crimson Tide.

Croom pronounced his team's spring "excellent," but at the same time, the futures of six Bulldogs players–including the super-heralded Derek Pegues–remain in the balance. Pegues, Charles Burns, Keith Fitzhugh and three others were arrested on assault charges in early April. Croom has suspended the players, with no word on their futures.

Even with those six, MSU's 2006 season figures to be rough. Without them, the mountain gets almost impossible to climb.

And in the bigger picture, Croom needs something good to happen to him, personally. He is 6-16 after two seasons, and were it not for a 38-31 upset of Florida in 2004 and a surprise thumping of rival Ole Miss in the 2005 Egg Bowl, the coaching seat in Starkville would be very, very warm.

Even without the distractions, this Bulldogs team is a team without much of an identity.

Sylvester Croom

At quarterback, Michael Henig returns after a lackluster half-season in the driver's seat. Henig took over for Omarr Conner, who is now a wide receiver, for the 2005 Alabama game. Henig's stats (60-of-135, 44.4 per cent, 621 yards, 2 TDs, 5 interceptions) were subpar, and better things are expected quickly. Depth is questionable, with backup Tray Rutland one of the players suspended following the April fracas.

Running back is also a major question mark. Brandon Thornton, atop the depth chart for much of the spring, is smaller than most SEC tailbacks (5-11, 185 pounds), and has had a problem holding onto the football thus far in his college career. Reserve Brandon Hart, a big guy at 235 pounds, carried the ball only 11 times for 24 yards (2.2 average) in 2005. Third-teamer Justin Williams had no carries. At least the Bulldogs are solid at fullback with Bryson Davis.

Croom is hoping the addition of junior college transfer Tony Burks infuses the wide receiver corps with some playmaking ability. Burks, at 6-4 and 215 pounds, gives MSU a much-needed big play threat. Conner draws the other starting assignment, with dependable Will Prosser the first man off the bench. That threesome could cause some trouble in the SEC. Joey Sanders gives MSU a home run threat, but while he caught 137 yards in passes last year, he snagged only 7 balls total. He must get more involved in the offense. The biggest threat in the receiving game, though, will probably be tight end Eric Butler, who could be the next in a line of NFL tight ends from the SEC. MSU has excellent depth there with Dezmond Sherrod and Jason Husband coming off the bench, although both players need to get bigger.

Offensive line could be a problem, as Michael Gates is one of the "Suspended Six." Gates was set to start at right tackle opposite Calvin Wilson at left tackle. Now the job may fall to redshirt freshman Craig Jenkins. If it does, MSU will have perhaps the worst

Continued on Page 84

GAME TEN: MISSISSIPPI STATE

Saturday, November 4, Bryant-Denny, Tuscaloosa

Location: Starkville, Mississippi
Nickname: Bulldogs
Colors: Maroon & White
Conference: Southeastern
Stadium: Davis Wade Stadium at Scott Field (52,844)
2005 Record: 3-8 (1-7 SEC West)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 15-72-3
Head Coach: Sylvester Croom (Alabama, 1975)
Career Record: 6-16-0, 2 years
Record at Mississippi State: 6-16-0, 2 years
Starters Returning: 16
Offense (6): WR Will Prosser, QB Michael Henig, FB Bryson Davis, TE Eric Butler, G Brian Anderson, G Anthony Strauder
Defense (8): E Titus Brown, E Michael Heard, T Andrew Powell, T Deljuan Robinson, OLB Gabe O'Neal, MLB Quinton Culberson, CB David Heard, S Jeramie Johnson
Specialists (2): PK Keith Andrews, P Blake McAdams

2005 Results

September 3	Mississippi State	38	Murray State	6
September 10	Auburn	28	Mississippi State	0
September 17	Mississippi State	21	Tulane	14
September 24	Georgia	23	Mississippi State	10
October 1	LSU	37	Mississippi State	7
October 8	Florida	35	Mississippi State	9
October 22	Houston	28	Mississippi State	16
October 29	Kentucky	13	Mississippi State	7
November 5	Alabama	17	Mississippi State	0
November 19	Arkansas	44	Mississippi State	10
November 26	Mississippi State	35	Ole Miss	14

2006 Schedule

August 31	South Carolina
September 9	Auburn
September 16	Tulane
September 23	at UAB
September 30	at LSU
October 7	West Virginia
October 14	Jacksonville State
October 21	at Georgia
October 28	Kentucky
November 4	at ALABAMA
November 18	Arkansas
November 25	at Ole Miss

By Jess Nicholas

Tigers try to avoid singing the bayou blues

While Alabama's rebuilding efforts have been well-documented, another SEC West team has been trying to stay far under the radar with its rebuilding work.

Alabama may have to rebuild its defense, but LSU is under construction on both sides of the ball. Gone are three starters from the defensive line, plus all three linebackers. Also gone are three starters on the offensive line and a key reserve, not to mention tight end David Jones and running back Joseph Addai. And several other positions have been affected by injuries, not the least of which is special teams, with punter-placekicker Chris Jackson currently rehabbing Tommy John surgery on an elbow.

But the biggest question mark for LSU may involve not the positions with too few players, but the one position with too many: Quarterback.

JaMarcus Russell seemed to be emerging as the Tigers' top signal-caller in 2005. He threw for 2,443 yards on 188-of-311 (60.5 per cent) passing, 15 touchdowns and only 9 interceptions. But Russell was injured in the SEC Championship Game, forcing Matt Flynn into duty.

Not only did Flynn finish the season with respectable stats (27-of-48, 56.3 per cent, 457 yards, 7 TDs, 1 interception), he led the Tigers to a convincing win over Miami in LSU's bowl game. With Russell still limited in the spring, Flynn got the bulk of the work, but also split time with Ryan Perrilloux, perhaps the most

Les Miles

heralded prep quarterback signed by any school over the past five years.

Spring solved nothing, and LSU heads into the fall with Russell expected to again be the starter. He has all the physical tools he'll ever need, but continues to have times when his mind doesn't seem to be in the game. Russell is drawing comparisons to former Auburn quarterback Jason Campbell, who didn't come into his own until his junior and senior seasons. Russell will be a junior in 2006.

At running back, Justin Vincent was expected to grab the starting position, but he tore an ACL against Miami and may not play in the fall. Alley Broussard tore an ACL last fall and missed spring work, but should be back in time for fall 2006. While there are questions at the top, depth is almost embarrassingly good, with Antonio Robinson and R.J. Jackson leading the charge. Fullback Jacob Hester is first-rate, and reserve Steven Korte is a future star.

Despite losing Skyler Green to graduation, LSU is as deep at wide receiver as anyone. Dwayne Bowe broke Alabama's heart in overtime last year and is back to wreak more havoc. Craig Davis, Early Doucet and Xavier Carter will compete for the other slot, with Carlos Rachel, Brandon LaFell and signees rounding everything out. Keith Zinger gets the call at tight end with Mit Cole, Andrew Wright and Doug Planchard providing a lot of depth. Zinger could end up as one of the best tight ends in the conference this year.

The offensive line may need some work. Guard should be solid with Will Arnold and Brian Johnson returning, and Brett Helms figures to be a decent replacement for Rudy Niswanger at center. Tackle could be an issue, though, with Herman Johnson taking over left tackle. Peter Dyakowski, a senior role player, is currently listed as the starter at right tackle, but junior college transfer Phil Loadholt could take the job in the fall.

Continued on Page 84

GAME ELEVEN: At LSU

Saturday, November 11, Tiger Stadium, Baton Rouge

Location: Baton Rouge, Louisiana
Nickname: Bengal Tigers
Colors: Purple & Gold
Conference: Southeastern
Stadium: Tiger Stadium (91,600)
2005 Record: 11-2 (7-1 SEC West)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 21-43-5
Head Coach: Les Miles (Michigan, 1976)
Career Record: 39-23-0, 5 years
Record at LSU: 11-2, 1 year
Starters Returning: 10
Offense (5): WR Dwayne Bowe, G Will Arnold, G Brian Johnson, QB JaMarcus Russell, FB Jacob Hester
Defense (4): E Chase Pittman, CB Chevis Jackson, S Jessie Daniels, S LaRon Landry
Specialists (1): PK/P Chris Jackson

2005 Results

September 10	LSU	35	Arizona State	31
September 26	Tennessee	30	LSU	27 (OT)
October 1	LSU	37	Mississippi State	7
October 8	LSU	34	Vanderbilt	6
October 15	LSU	21	Florida	17
October 22	LSU	20	Auburn	17 (OT)
October 29	LSU	56	North Texas	3
November 5	LSU	24	Appalachian State	0
November 12	LSU	16	Alabama	13 (OT)
November 19	LSU	40	Ole Miss	7
November 25	LSU	19	Arkansas	17
December 3	Georgia	34	LSU	14 (SEC Championship)
December 30	LSU	40	Miami (Fla.)	3 (Peach Bowl)

2006 Schedule

September 2	La.-Lafayette
September 9	Arizona
September 16	at Auburn
September 23	Tulane
September 30	Mississippi State
October 7	at Florida
October 14	Kentucky
October 21	Fresno State
November 4	at Tennessee
November 11	ALABAMA
November 18	Ole Miss
November 25	at Arkansas (Little Rock, Ark.)

By Jess Nicholas

AU will be Bama's toughest test

It's fitting that Alabama's toughest game of the year figures to come at the very end of the season. But while it's fitting, don't expect Alabama fans to jump for joy that Auburn remains a strong challenger.

The Tigers have had Alabama's number for four years now, and off-season hot stove chats got a lot hotter once Auburn head coach Tommy Tuberville became embroiled in the now-infamous Fear the thumb" nonsense.

The fact Tuberville allowed himself to succumb to such juvenility speaks volumes, but unfortunately, it doesn't change the fact that this Auburn team is tough.

Auburn has grown very physical in recent years under Tuberville. The 2006 Auburn team is no different. But Auburn must first replace some big pieces from its successful 2004 and 2005 teams.

Most notably on offense, that means finding replacements for bookend tackles Marcus McNeill and Troy Reddick. McNeill got the press, but Reddick was the intimidator of the two. In 2006, those jobs will fall to Jonathan Palmer and King Dunlap, who have experience but not necessarily the resume of the men they replace. In the middle, former walk-on Joe Cope returns as a starter at center, but he is average at best. Guards Tim Duckworth and Ben Grubbs are athletic enough, but will both be pushed by Leon Hart. Antwoin Daniels backs up Dunlap and Palmer outside.

Given the line is laden with upperclassmen, quarterback Brandon Cox (177-of-306, 57.8 per cent, 2,324 yards, 15 TDs, 8 interceptions) should have a solid second season under center. Cox doesn't have much arm strength or foot speed, but his accuracy and decision-making skills make him dangerous. Kenny Irons (256 carries, 1,293 yards, 5.1 average, 13 TDs) and Brad Lester (52 carries, 339 yards, 6.5 average, 5 TDs) form a formidable one-two punch at running back, with senior Tre Smith available as both a running back and receiver. Fullback could be an issue, though. Mike McLaughlin, who was to take over for Jake Slaughter, has been hurt, leaving converted tailback Carl Stewart with the job. Depth is good there, but Stewart's blocking will be a source of concern until he's proven himself.

Tommy Tuberville

Wide receiver was ravaged by graduation. Courtney Taylor, selected for numerous pre-season all-SEC teams in 2005, was hurt early and never reappeared, catching just 22 balls for 278 yards (12.6 average) and 1 touchdown. Auburn will rely heavily on him in 2006. Prechae Rodriguez is a big target at 6-4, 200 pounds, and will start opposite Taylor. The bench has plenty of talent, but not much experience. James Swinton (1 catch, 11 yards) will battle redshirt freshmen Montez Billings, Ulysses Alexander and Jarvez Williams for playing time. Lee Guess and Jamoga Ramsey are also around, but aren't playmakers. Cole Bennett should slide in nicely at tight end, replacing Cooper Wallace, but depth will come from a pair of undersized redshirt freshmen, Tommy Trott and Gabe McKenzie.

Defensively, Auburn has slightly more to worry about, particularly up front. Tommy Jackson and Wayne Dickens graduated in the middle, while end Stanley McClover took his game to the NFL two years early. That leaves Quentin Groves as the only returning starter up front, opposite Marquies Gunn. Both are smaller, quick ends who specialize in rushing the passer as opposed to stopping the run. By contrast, tackles Josh Thompson and Sen'Derrick Marks are pure run stoppers who don't figure much into the pass rushing game. Tackle Tez Doolittle and end Chris Browder are the only reserves with experience. Tackle Pat Sims is being counted on heavily to produce off the bench.

Continued on Page 84

GAME TWELVE: AUBURN

Saturday, November 18, Bryant-Denny, Tuscaloosa

Location: Auburn, Alabama
Nickname: Tigers
Colors: Burnt Orange & Navy Blue
Conference: Southeastern
Stadium: Jordan-Hare Stadium (85,214)
2005 Record: 9-3 (7-1 SEC West)
All-Time Record vs. Alabama: 31-38-1
Head Coach: Tommy Tuberville (Southern Arkansas, 1976)
Career Record: 85-47, 11 years
Record at Auburn: 60-27, 7 years
Starters Returning: 13
Offense (6): WR Courtney Taylor, G Ben Grubbs, C Joe Cope, G Tim Duckworth, QB Brandon Cox, TB Kenny Irons
Defense (5): E Quentin Groves, OLB Kevin Sears, OLB Will Herring, CB David Irons, S Eric Brock
Specialists (2): PK John Vaughn, P Kody Bliss

2005 Results

September 3	Georgia Tech	23	Auburn	14
September 10	Auburn	28	Mississippi State	0
September 17	Auburn	63	Ball State	3
September 24	Auburn	37	Western Kentucky	14
October 1	Auburn	48	South Carolina	7
October 15	Auburn	34	Arkansas	17
October 22	LSU	20	Auburn	17 (OT)
October 29	Auburn	27	Ole Miss	3
November 5	Auburn	49	Kentucky	27
November 12	Auburn	31	Georgia	30
November 19	Auburn	28	Alabama	18
January 2	Wisconsin	24	Auburn	10 (Capital One Bowl)

2006 Schedule

September 2	Washington State
September 9	at Mississippi State
September 16	LSU
September 23	Buffalo
September 28	at South Carolina
October 7	Arkansas
October 14	Florida
October 21	Tulane
October 28	at Ole Miss
November 4	Arkansas State
November 11	Georgia
November 18	at ALABAMA

By Andrew Bone

Tide likely to add wide receivers, defensive linemen, linebackers in 2007

Recruiting

For the past few years, Alabama has been able to add 25 new signees as the Crimson Tide attempts to fight back from the lost scholarships of NCAA probation. Although Bama will continue to be very young, and will be a little short on depth in some positions, the effort to get back to a full complement of scholarshipped football players has been successful.

In fact, it has been so successful that just looking at the raw numbers suggests that Alabama will not be able to add 25 new signees in 2007. Theoretically, a team can add up to 25 new signees each year, provided no more than 85 players are on scholarship when a team begins fall camp. All players are on one-year scholarships and–also theoretically–a coach has the ability to manipulate the numbers by withdrawing the scholarships of players. That rarely happens.

It appears that as of this summer, Bama would have only about 13 scholarship spots available for the 2007 signing class. Historically, other spots open up. Some players currently on scholarship and with eligibility beyond the 2006 season almost certainly will not be with the Tide in 2007. Players leave a program for a variety of reasons, including early graduation, academic deficiencies, injury, dissatisfaction with program, or just a change in interest. It's too early to make an educated guess at what number the Crimson Tide will add in the upcoming signing class.

In 2007, Alabama recruiters are likely to target certain positions to add players. Although Bama Coach Mike Shula is interested in the best players possible regardless of position, a look at the current Bama depth chart by class indicates the need for wide receivers, defensive linemen, and linebackers.

Here, by position, is a look at some who have been connected with Alabama for 2007 recruiting.

QUARTERBACK

The Tide will look to add one quarterback in the class of 2007. The Bama coaching staff likes to see quarterback prospects in summer camp for an up-close-and-personal observation. Few quarterbacks have received scholarship offers from Alabama, but more can be expected after the senior camps. Here are some who may be involved with Alabama:

Larry Smith, 6-2, 200, 4.6 40 time, Prattville, is the state's top prep quarterback. The Lions will field yet another talented team. Louisville extended an early scholarship offer, and the in-state schools have an interest as well. Smith passed for over 2,000 yards with 18 touchdowns and only two interceptions during his junior campaign. He lists his top three schools as Alabama, Auburn and Louisville. He does not plan to make an early decision.

Chris Relf, 6-3, 206, 4.8, Montgomery Carver, had received some interest from Alabama, but after the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa Relf committed to Mississippi State. Relf passed for 1,500 yards in a Wing-T offense during his junior campaign.

Roosevelt Byrd, 6-0, 205, 4.7, Foley, passed for over 3,000 yards and 25 touchdowns as a junior. In the Alabama Junior All-Star game he was selected MVP for the South squad in a 16-7 victory.

Zach Smith, 6-0, 180 4.52, Blountsville Susan Moore has been a starter since his ninth grade season. Smith has passed for approximately 6,000 career yards going into his senior season. He was named MVP of the North squad in the Alabama Junior All-Star game in December. Smith may be a receiver or defensive back on the next level. He hears regularly from Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Florida, Louisville, Mississippi State, Ole Miss and Vanderbilt. He ran an impressive 4.52 40-yard-dash and 4.54 shuttle at the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa. He said he is an Alabama fan.

Last year Alabama went to Texas and signed a quarterback who had been in the

Crimson Tide's summer camp. This year Bama is looking at G. J. Kinne, 6-1, 215, 4.6, of Canton High School in Gilmer, Texas. Kinne was named all-state, 3A Offensive Player of the Year and Mr. Texas Football in 2005. The dual-threat quarterback is attracting a lot of attention. Kinne holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Baylor, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Tennessee. He passed for 4,200 yards as a junior and has a career total of 8,600 yards. Kinne is the son of 2005 National Coach of the Year, Gary Joe Kinne, new assistant football coach at Baylor.

Stephen Garcia, 6-3, 212, 4.7, Tampa (Florida) Jefferson, is a three year starter with impressive numbers during his sophomore and junior seasons. He passed for 2,800 yards with a two year total of 55 touchdowns. As a sophomore, Garcia led his team to a state championship. He was in Tuscaloosa in the spring for an unofficial visit. Garcia holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Florida, Ole Miss, South Carolina, Florida State, Georgia and Ohio State.

RUNNING BACK

The state of Alabama is loaded with talented running backs, and they took center stage at the Scout.com Combine in Tuscaloosa. Nineteen top in-state upcoming senior performers and several from Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee were in attendance. A look:

Rico Sharp

Rico Sharpe, 6-0, 194, 4.5, Hewitt-Trussville, was the top running back at the Tuscaloosa Scout.com combine. Sharpe's 4.35 shuttle time, 34.8-inch vertical jump and 40-yard-dash time (4.5) were impressive. He recorded over 1,000 yards rushing and 18 touchdowns during his junior season. Alabama and Auburn lead.

Terrell Edwards

Terrell Edwards, 6-2, 200, 4.65, Mobile UMS-Wright, is one of the top running backs in the state after playing a back-up role in 2005. The Bulldogs are the defending class 4A state champions, and Edwards is expected to help carry the load after recording over 750 yards and 15 touchdowns in 2005. Kentucky was the first school to extend a scholarship offer. He had a great performance at the Scout.com All-American combine in Tuscaloosa. His 4.44 shuttle time and 7.38 L-Cone time was very impressive. He recorded a 33.9-inch vertical jump and a great 9-9 standing broad jump.

Dennis King, 5-7, 177, 4.47, Hoover, also had a good combine, both in testing and in one-on-one competition. As a junior he rushed for 696 yards and five touchdowns. He is hearing from Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi State and Vanderbilt and lists those as his favorites.

Corderrius Bimbo, 5-7, 157, 4.42, Birmingham West End, is a "Prothro-style" playmaker. He is as an elusive runner and special teams performer. He timed a 4.42 forty-yard-dash, a 4.28 shuttle and a 36.0-inch vertical jump at the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa. As a junior he had 2,371 all-purpose yards including 986 rushing with 11 touchdowns, 629 receiving with 4 touchdowns and 756 kick return yards with two touchdowns. He is receiving interest from Arkansas, Auburn, Georgia, Tennessee and Vanderbilt.

Additional running backs on the recruiting radar include: James Jackson (Pike County), Micah Alexander (Buckhorn), J.J. Motley (Autaugaville), Jovan Johnson (Stanhope Elmore), Marcus Cox (Baldwin County), Nick Anderson (Oak Mountain), Terrence Wilkes (Wadley), Ronald Belser (Carver of Montgomery), Darnado Smith (Carver of Montgomery), B.J. Prince (Thompson) and Thomas Oliver (Grissom).

Bama also looks out of state. Holding scholarship offers from Alabama are:

Lee Chambers, 5-11, 165, Coffeeville, Mississippi, has offers from Alabama, Southern Miss, Florida State, Louisville, Mississippi State and South Carolina. Chambers gained 1,445 rushing yards during his junior season with 19 touchdowns. The three-year starter is also a talented track athlete, the 1A state champion at 100 meters. His best time for the event is a swift 10.56.

Rudell Crim of James Rickards in Tallahassee is a state track champion as well as top football running back. Florida is favored, but he is also considering Alabama, Michigan, and Illinois.

Jamar Taylor of Lakeland, Florida, is a fullback prospect. The 5-10, 205-pounder led his team with 166 points as he rushed for 1,217 yards on 197 carries (6.2 average) and scored 27 touchdowns. He has a 4.6 40 time. He has offers from Clemson, Pittsburgh, Ole Miss and Alabama.

Although Johnny Brown of Charleston, Mississippi, has been listed with Alabama, he said he is firm in his commitment to Ole Miss. Brown was named the Region 4 (3A) Player

of the Year after rushing for 1,788 yards and 24 touchdowns.

Other out-of-state running backs on the recruiting radar include: Dominique Booker (Lakeland Evangel Christian), T.J. Clark (Melbourne, Florida), Josh Brumfield (Brandon-Northwest, Miss.), Courtney Coffee (Hendersonville, Tennessee, John Paul II), Chris Douglas (Suwannee, Georgia, Peachtree Ridge), Nathan Jew (Jackson, Mississippi, Academy), Octavious Logan (Crawford, Mississippi, East Oktibbeha County), Darnell Ratcliff (Chicago King), and Eric Williams (Merrillville, Indiana).

RECEIVER

This is one of those positions where Bama depth is not good. But it can be helped quickly with young talent. Look for Bama to sign at least three wide receivers. Some prospects:

Desmond Jennings, 6-3, 195, 4.5, Pinson Valley, is at Itawamba Junior College in Mississippi. Jennings was an original signee in the Tide's 2005 class, but after failing to qualify, he enrolled at Itawamba. He was drafted by the Cleveland Indians after an outstanding high school baseball career, but not as high as he had hoped, therefore making a decision to get his grades in order and return to Alabama in 2007. He stars for the Itawamba baseball team as well. Jennings is on pace to graduate in December and will have three years to complete two years of eligibility.

Christian Smith, 6-1, 195, 4.5, Birmingham Huffman, would seem like a sure thing for the Tide since he's the younger brother of Alabama's star 2006 signee, Andre Smith. Christian is making a lot of noise in his own right. Smith tested extremely well at the U.S. Army National combine in San Antonio in January, and he was prepared for the Scout.com All-American combine in Tuscaloosa in April. He walked away as the top receiver of the combine. Smith has scholarship offers from several elite programs including Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, LSU and Tennessee. He is enjoying the recruiting process and plans to wait until he takes his official visits before making a decision.

Brandon Gibson, 6-2, 190, 4.5 Mobile UMS-Wright, ranks as one of the South's premier wide receiver prospects. He has garnered scholarship offers from Alabama, Auburn, Georgia, LSU and Tennessee. Gibson had a productive junior campaign recording 43 catches for 750 yards and 13 touchdowns. Hhe said. "Alabama is still my top choice."

Marquez Strickland, 6-2, 195, 4.5, Opelika, has increased his stock with a solid junior campaign and his great Scout.com combine performance at Georgia Tech. He rushed for 561 yards on 56 carries and scored eight touchdowns in 2005. He recorded 28 receptions for 487 yards and scored four touchdowns. He returned one punt and one kick-off for touchdowns. He does not name a leader for his signature, but lists favorites as Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Mississippi State, Southern Miss, Tennessee and Vanderbilt.

Additional in-state receiver targets include: Tim Alexander (Erwin), William Bjorklund (Murphy), Nate Carlson (Briarwood Christian), Justin Craig (Sumiton Christian), Demarcus Covington (John Carroll), Sam Edwards (Clay-Chalkville), Lydarius Friend (Buckhorn), Richie Henderson (Daphne), Henry Jackson (LeFlore), Anthony McCall (Montgomery Academy), Jory Johnson (St. Paul's), Stanley Jones (Houston Academy), Tyler Robbins (Homewood), Zach Shaw (Trinity Presbyterian), Cordero Smith (Central-Phenix City) and Ralph Spry, Jr. (Auburn).

A partial list of out-of-state receivers holding scholarship offers from the Tide include:

Deonte Thompson, the 5-11, 186-pound Scout.com five-star. He recorded three 40-yard-dash times of 4.28 at the Scout.com All-American combine in Jacksonville, Florida. He caught 35 passes for 767 yards and had 12 kick-off returns for an impressive 515 yards and two touchdowns. Thompson holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Auburn, Florida, Georgia, Miami, Notre Dame, and USC.

Golden Tate, Mr. Football in Tennessee for 2005, from Hendersonville John Paul II, recorded 1,027 yards rushing on 137 carries and 38 receptions for 813 yards for a combined total of 20 touchdowns for his junior year. The speedy 6-0, 180-pound Tate also returned 19 kick-offs for 426 yards, three returned for touchdowns, including a 96 yard score. Tate holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Tennessee and Vanderbilt.

Darrius Young recorded 25 pass receptions in 2005 for 680 yards, a dazzling 27.2 yards-per-catch. The Shannon, Mississippi, star holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, and Tennessee.

Others from out of Alabama who have been mentioned with the Tide include:

Steven Black (Vestavia Hills and East Mississippi Junior College), Clint Boling (Alpharetta, Georgia, Chattahoochee) Brandon Clear (Williamsburg, Virginia, -Jamestown), Jasmine Dalton (Independence, Louisiana), Roderick Davis (Memphis Wooddale), Antwon Dixon (Terry, Mississippi), Demarcus Fox (Calhoun City, Mississippi), Jake Goray (Fort Walton Beach Choctawhatchee), Marcus Green (DeKalb, Mississippi, Kemper County), Roderick Jefferson (Batesville, Mississippi, South Panola), Derrick Ross (Magnolia, Mississippi, -South Pike), Chris Walker (Memphis Christian Brothers), and Paul Wilson (Lakeland).

TIGHT END

Despite some misses on high-profile tight ends the past few years, it appears Alabama has landed the cream of the crop among college performers and is stockpiled with good young ones. Still, this is a position Coach Mike Shula likes to recruit, sometimes for other positions. The standout in Alabama is Nick Fairley, 6-4, 260, 4.8, Mobile Williamson. Fairley's stock increased dramatically following his Scout.com combine performance as he left Tuscaloosa with the MVP award. Fairley plays on the offensive and defensive line for his high school squad, but projects as a tight end on the next level. He has great speed and quickness and several position options are available for college coaches looking to fill a need. Early offers include Auburn, Kansas State, LSU and West Virginia.

OFFENSIVE LINE

Alabama hit the jackpot in recruiting offensive linemen last year, but the Tide has been low in numbers on the offensive front in recent years and this is likely still an area of priority. Some to watch are:

Ryan Pugh, 6-3, 270, 5.3, Birmingham Hoover, is considered by many to be the top offensive line prospect in the state, and some 20 scholarship offers seem to bear that out. He has transferred from Spain Park to powerful Hoover. He was impressive at the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa. Auburn is considered the front-runner for his signature with his parents as graduates from that school. Other offers have come from Clemson, Georgia Tech, Louisville, LSU, Tennessee, and Vanderbilt.

William Vlachos, 6-1, 302, 5.2, Mountain Brook, showed why he is considered the strongest offensive lineman in the state after tossing up 185 pounds 34 times at the Alabama Junior All-Star Game. LSU was the first to extend a scholarship offer. Alabama offered a grayshirt (delayed enrollment until 2008). Vlachos turned in a dominating performance at the Scout.com combine. He grew up a Tide fan.

William Vlachos

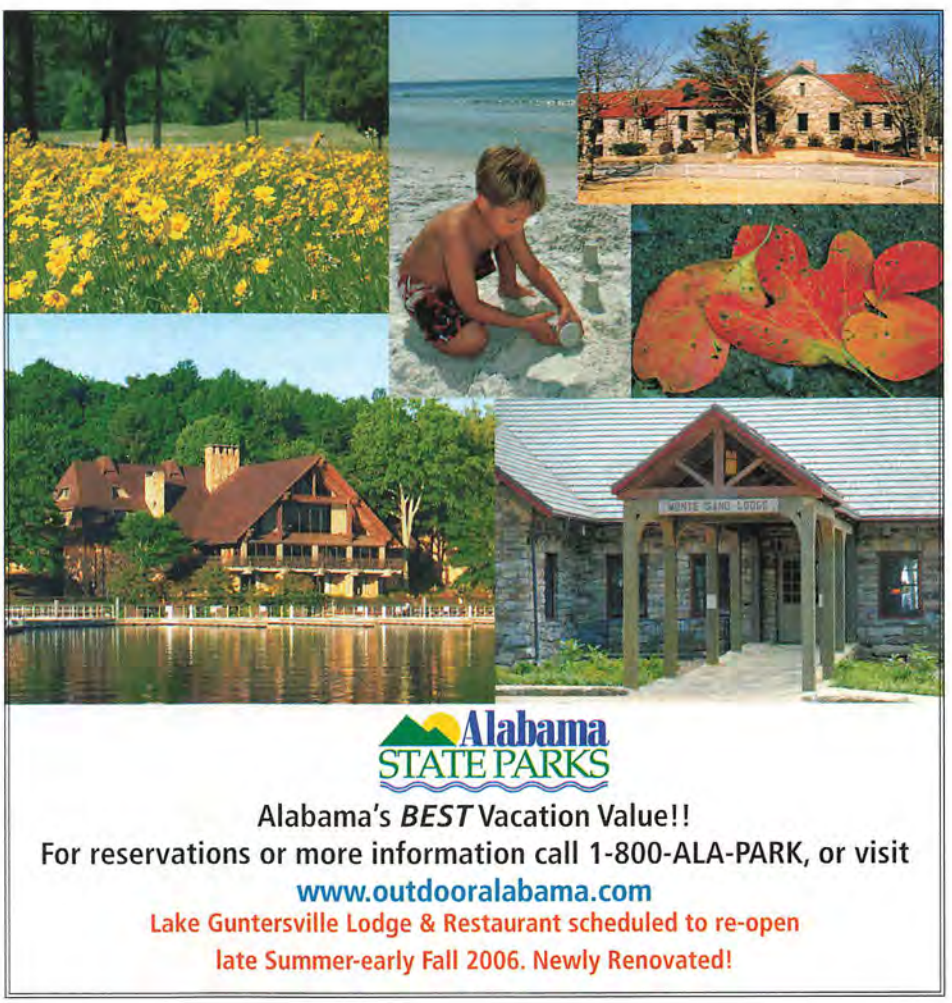
Henry Porter, 6-2, 300, 5.3, Opelika, improved his stock at the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa. He is receiving interest from Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Louisville, Southern Miss and Tennessee. He does not list any favorites.

Keiandre Jones, 6-3, 360, 5.5 Tuscaloosa Hillcrest, ran a 5.59 40-yard-dash at the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa, an impressive time for a prospect his size. He performed well in the one-on-one competition.

Other in-state offensive lineman on the recruiting radar include: Rakim Billingsley (Sylacauga), Jared Cooper (Brewton W.S. Neal), Patrick Crump (Hoover), Thomas Gray (Vestavia), Austin Hayes (Cedar Bluff), Nathaniel Hood (West End-Birmingham), Rodney Hudson (B.C. Rain), Antonio Jelks (Gadsden), Marcus Kornegay (Jess Lanier)Victor Phillips (Minor), Codi Taylor (Fairhope), Caleb Thomas (Decatur), and Taz Tillery (Russellville).

A partial list of out-of-state offensive lineman holding scholarship offers from Alabama include:

Anthony Morgan, 6-4, 335, of Dallas, Texas, Lancaster, had been reported as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having committed to LSU, but he said that is not correct. Morgan holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Florida, Kansas, Kansas State and Oklahoma State.

Dustin Anglin of Evangel Christian School in Lakeland, Florida, is a 6-5, 280-pound two-way lineman. Anglin recorded 138 tackles and 14 sacks on the defensive side of the ball but, projects on the offensive side on the next level. Anglin does not hold a scholarship offer from the Tide, but receiving heavy interest from the coaching staff.

Other out-of-state lineman on the recruiting radar are Will Cochran (Newnan, Georgia, Northgate), Will Furlong (Deland, Florida), Stuart Hines (Bowling Green, Kentucky), Colton Jenkins (Winona, Mississippi), Romelle Matthews (Mississippi Delta Community College), Taylor Quick (Terry, Mississippi), Walter Taylor (Meridian, Mississippi), Zack Ray (Copiah-Lincoln Community College, Mississippi), Derek Sherrod (Caledonia, Mississippi), Chaz Turner (Giles County, Tennessee), Jason Vise (Franklin, Georgia, Heard County) and Charles Wood (Gainesville, Georgia).

DEFENSIVE LINE

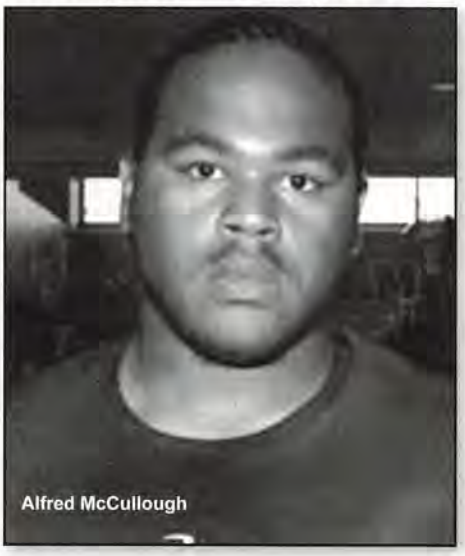
This is an area of great priority for Alabama, in part because it should be an area of priority every year and in part because the Tide did not add many new defensive linemen in the most recent signing class.

Things have not gotten off to a good start. The man projected as the number one prospect in Alabama is just what Bama needs, but Sidell Corley, 6-4, 250, 4.8, Mobile McGill-Toolen, has committed to Florida. Corley, who said he had an excellent visit to Bama unofficially in the spring, has not ruled out the possibility of an official visit to Bama before signing day.

The top uncommitted defensive lineman in the state is Kerry Murphy, 6-5, 323, 5.3, Hoover. Murphy is a dominating presence and has been an anchor for two years for one of the nation's most prestigious high school football programs. He has collected scholarship offers from Alabama, Auburn, Clemson, Louisville, Mississippi State, and Ole Miss. The Crimson Tide is the front-runner.

Kerry Murphy

Alfred McCullough, 6-2, 303, 5.1, Athens, is a pure defensive tackle clogging up the middle on the run and getting by offensive lineman to pass rush. He recorded 67 tackles, 16 tackles for loss, 11 sacks and six pass break-ups as a junior. McCullough received his first scholarship offer from the Crimson Tide and added offers from Ole Miss and South Carolina. He lists his favorites as Alabama, Auburn, Georgia Tech, Clemson, Ole Miss and South Carolina. McCullough does not plan to make an early decision.


Alfred McCullough

Nick Gentry, 6-1, 265, 4.8, Prattville, is part of that excellent program that has produced a number of Alabama signees in recent years. He had an excellent junior season with 100 tackles, 52 tackles for loss, and an amazing 22 sacks. He was all-state. Scholarship offers have come from Alabama, Auburn, Florida State, Louisville, Ole Miss, and Tennessee.

D.J. Looney, 6-2, 280, 5.3, Birmingham Oak Mountain, stars on the offensive line for his high school squad, but he projects on the defensive line in college. He participated in the Alabama Junior All-Star game and gave a top performance. Looney excelled at the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa. He was dominant offensively and defensively in the one-on-one competition.

DJ Looney

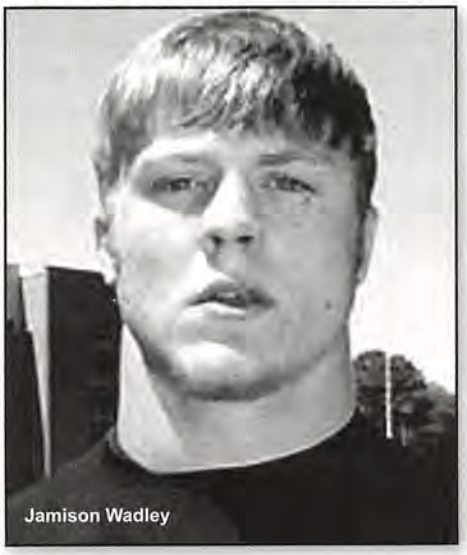
Justin Sanders, 6-5, 270, 4.9, New Market Buckhorn, recorded 122 tackles, 18 sacks and 16 tackles for loss as a junior. He participated in the Alabama Junior All-Star game. Sanders has collected scholarship offers from Louisville and Southern Miss. His favorite team is Alabama.

Josh Chapman, 6-1, 280, 4.9, Hoover, increased his stock tremendously during the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa. His full-stride 40-yard-dash was comparable to a bull running down the lane. He was the MVP of the defense as he dominated the one-on-one competition. Chapman recorded 65 tackles,

six sacks and three forced fumbles during his junior campaign. He is a work-out warrior recording a 370-pound bench press, 550-pound squat, and 325-pound power clean. Chapman said Alabama is a slight favorite over Auurn, Ole Miss, Louisville, and LSU.

Josh Chapman

Other Alabama prep seniors who could emerge as defensive line prospects include Brandon Boudreaux (Auburn), Lionel Henderson (Davidson), Logan Hickman (Gulf Shores), Darrius Jackson (Fairfield), Courtney Ray (LaFayette), Josh Sommerville (Aliceville), Jhrron Spencer (Aliceville), Zach Swindall (Charles Henderson), Josh Thompson (Colbert County), Drew Traylor (Mountain Brook), Jamison Wadley (Etowah), Isaiah Williams (Hoover), Nolan Willison (Fairhope), Brett Young (Russellville), and Jeremiah Zene (West End).


Jamison Wadley

Some out-of-state defensive lineman holding scholarship offers from the Tide include:

John Brown is a talented defensive tackle from Lakeland (Florida) Dreadnaught, which have won 30 in a row and two straight State titles. Brown is 6-1, 285-pounds. He holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Florida State, Ole Miss, Nebraska and Pittsburgh.

Torrey Davis, 6-5, 283, from Seffner, Florida, Armood, has a 4.8 40 time. As a junior he had 60 tackles and nine sacks. Davis is considering offers from Alabama, Florida, Florida State, Auburn, and Georgia.

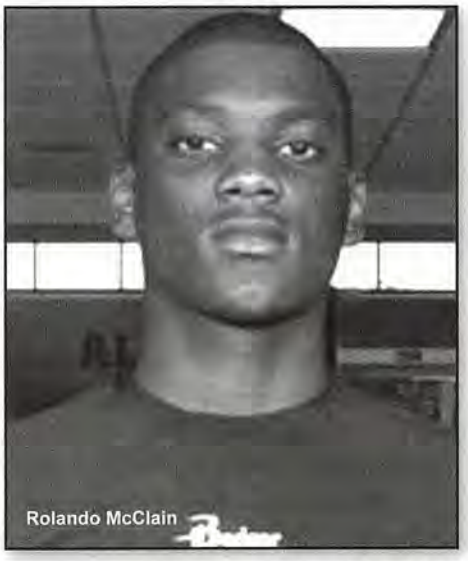
Alex Watkins, a quick defensive end at Brownsville, Tennessee, Haywood, recorded 90 tackles and 15 sacks his junior season. He has been clocked at 4.6 in the 40. His offer list includes Alabama, Clemson, Memphis, Ole Miss, Mississippi State, and Tennessee.

Cortez Myles of Central High in Madison, Mississippi, is a 6-4, 255-pound aggressive defensive end. He recorded 40 tackles, three sacks, and 12 quarterback hurries during his junior season. These numbers are impressive as he battled injury the last three games. His 4.8 forty-yard-dash speed has helped him get scholarship offers from Alabama, Auburn, Ole Miss, Florida, Memphis, Mississippi State, and Southern Miss.

Patrick Grant, a defensive end at Anderson High in Lauderdale Lakes, Florida, recorded 48 tackles and 12 sacks during his junior season. He also runs the 400 meters for his high school track team. At 6-3, 215-pounds and 4.7 40-yard-dash speed, Grant has received scholarship offers from Alabama and Marshall.

LINEBACKER

Rolando McClain, 6-3, 234, 4.75, Decatur, was the headliner of the talented group of linebackers in Tuscaloosa for the Scout.com combine. He had an impressive junior season recording 104 tackles, four sacks, one interception, three forced fumbles and one fumble recovery. He recorded 24 receptions for 436 yards from his tight end position. As one of the best in the South, he holds numerous scholarship offers, including those from Alabama, Auburn, Kentucky, Louisville, Ole Miss, Mississippi State and Vanderbilt. McClain lists his favorite college player as recently-graduated Alabama linebacker DeMeco Ryans.

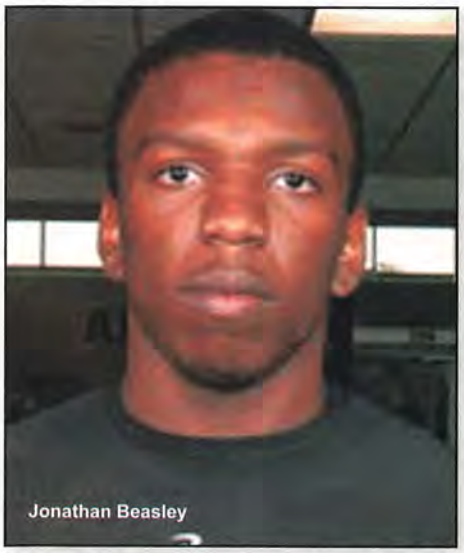

Rolando McClain

Eltoro Freeman, 5-11, 200, 4.59, Alexander City Benjamin Russell, stole the show at the Tuscaloosa Scout.com combine. He ranks as one of the top linebacker prospects in the South. His best testing came from his vertical and standing broad jump. He had a combine-best 40.2-inch vertical jump and a combine-best 10-1 broad jump. He was consistent throughout the day during the one-on-one competition as well. He recorded 100 tackles, 52 for lost yardage, eight sacks, three forced fumbles, one fumble recovery and two pass deflections during his junior campaign. He lists his early favorites as Alabama, Auburn, Florida and Florida State.

Jeffrey Daniels, 6-1, 230, 4.87, Brantley, was impressive in individual drill work at the Tuscaloosa combine. He is used mainly as a run-stopper for his high school squad. He had a monster junior campaign recording 158 tackles and five interceptions. He lists his favoriotes as

Alabama, Auburn, Florida State, LSU, Florida, Tennessee and Louisville,.

Jonathan Beasley, 6-2, 209, 4.5, Montgomery Jeff Davis, had an impressive junior season with 86 tackles and six sacks. He was one of the best performers of the linebacker group at the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa. His testing numbers were impressive, and his one-on-one competition turned a lot of heads. His first scholarship offer was extended in the spring from Southern Miss. Alabama, Auburn, Florida and LSU are early contenders as well. He lists his overall favorite as Alabama.



Herschel Houston, 5-11, 233, 4.89, Centre Cherokee County, may be better known as a running back because he is following in the footsteps of his uncle, Martin Houston, a fullback on Bama's 1993 national championship team. He plays linebacker and running back in high school. At the combine in Tuscaloosa he worked with the linebacker group and had an excellent day. His 40-yard dash time (4.89) may land him at fullback in college. Houston rushed for 1,865 yards with 28 touchdowns during his junior campaign.

Albert Rocker, 6-1, 200, 4.72, New Market Sparkman, is receiving interest from Alabama, Auburn, Ohio State, Penn State and Miami. His 4.50 shuttle time at the Scout.com combine in Tuscaloosa was impressive and his 9-9 standing broad jump was one of the best of the combine.

Other linebackers in Alabama high schools who may end up on Bama's recruiting list include:

Dee Clark (Sheffield), Michael DeJohn (Hoover), Jonathan Birmingham (Benjamin Russell), Kenneth High-Dorsey (Homewood), Stanley Scarborough (Fairfield), Rodney Garrott (Sparkman), Hilliard Foster (Wetumpka), Mark Frazier (Vigor), Takendric Stewart (Vigor), Cassius Patton (Tuscaloosa Hillcrest), Derrick Williams (Curry), Brock Peters (Wilson), Kody Willis (Foley), Justin Vann (Bob Jones), Isaiah Person (Auburn), Justin Byrd (Washington County), Chris Humphries (Brewer), Marc Dunn (Westminster Academy), Robert Cook (Parker), and Terrence Thomas (Eufaula).

Alabama also will look out of state in an attempt to have a big recruiting year on linebackers. Here are some out-of-state senior linebackers who have been identified as interested in Bama and/or vice versa.

Allen Bailey, a Scout.com five-star, is from McIntosh County Academy in Darien, Georgia. Bailey (6-3, 245 pounds) recorded 128 tackles during his junior year. He also excels at fullback. He holds scholarship offers from Miami, Alabama, Florida, Georgia and Clemson.

Pat Lazear, 6-0, 220, Walt Whitman in Bethesda, Maryland, has scholarship offers from Alabama, Georgia, Oklahoma, Nebraska, Tennessee, Clemson, West Virginia, Pittsburgh, North Carolina State, Maryland, Syracuse and Marshall. Lazear has a focal point of tradition and likes the playing style of DeMeco Ryans. He has taken an unofficial visit to Alabama. Lazear had an impressive junior campaign at linebacker and running back. He rushed for over 1,000 yards and scored 18 touchdowns on offense. He recorded 124 tackles and 12 sacks on defense. He sees time on special teams as well. He plans to graduate in December and

enroll in the college of his choice for the spring semester. He names early favorites as Alabama, Georgia, Florida, Nebraska, Oklahoma and Ohio State.

Chris Donald, 6-3, 220, from Tennessee's Huntingdon High School, recorded 120 tackles (32 for a loss), 14 sacks, and five forced fumbles. Donald excels on offense as well with 1,637 rushing yards, 287 receiving yards and 27 touchdowns during his junior year. Donald holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Clemson, Ole Miss, and Tennessee.

John Stokes, 6-5 225, was both an all-state linebacker and a long snapper at Memphis University School. He has been on back-to-back state championship teams. He is also a three-year starter in basketball. His early list of scholarship offers include Alabama, Arkansas, Auburn, Memphis, Stanford, Vanderbilt, and Wake Forest.

Earl Patin, 6-2, 215, is from Southern University Lab School in Baton Rouge. He recorded 80 tackles on his way to an all-state award. Patin holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Auburn, Clemson and Ole Miss.

Xavier Lamb's junior season was cut short due to an ankle injury in the third game of the season. However, it was his performance in those three games that caught the eyes of college coaches. The fullback/linebacker prospect recorded 246 yards with three touchdowns and 20 tackles on defense. Lamb will have big shoes to fill as he takes over for Auburn signee Craig Stevens at middle linebacker this fall. His scholarship offers include Alabama, Auburn and Illinois.

DEFENSIVE BACK

Although Alabama signed a large number of defensive backs in the 2006 class, it is likely that a few good men will be taken for the critical secondary positions. Here are some from Alabama who have drawn Bama interest:

Michael McNeil, 6-2, 197, 4.6, Mobile Davidson, is the grandson for former All-Pro Receiver Clifton McNeil, who led the NFL with 71 catches for 944 yards and seven touchdown for San Francisco in 1968. Michael is a safety whose offers have come from Alabama, Auburn, Florida State and Ole Miss. As a junior he had 81 tackles, four interceptions and two sacks. FSU was McNeil's childhood favorite, and he ranks them near the top of his list.

Ryan Williams, 5-11, 195, 4.45, Mobile B.C. Rain, was a first team selection at the U.S. Army National Combine in San Antonio in January. He gave another great performance in Tuscaloosa in April at the Scout.com combine. Williams recorded 50 tackles and four interceptions during his junior season. He holds scholarship offers from Alabama, Kentucky, LSU, Ole Miss and Clemson. He said his favorite is Bama.

Elliott McGaskin, 6-1, 190, 4.6, Mobile B.C. Rain, was first noticed when he jumped between two receivers and intercepted a pass one-handed at the U.S. Army National combine in San Antonio. McGaskin had an impressive junior campaign rushing for over 1,200 yards with 10 touchdowns and recording 95 tackles with one interception on defense. He was one of the top three defensive backs at the Scout.com All-American combine in Tuscaloosa. His favorite is Alabama.

Phelon Jones, 6-0, 190, 4.4, Mobile McGill-Toolen, committed to Miami over Alabama and others.

Other top in-state defensive backs for the class of 2007 include Blake Burns (Sparkman), Chalankis Brown (Stanhope Elmore), Justin Byrd (Washington County), Derick Daniel (Fairfield), Broderick Ferguson (Jess Lanier), Cornelius Hare (Jess Lanier), Corey Hart (Loachapoka), LaMichael Howell (B.C. Rain), Rudy Jones (West End), Josh Linson (Hoover), Reginald McMiller (Tuscaloosa County), Kevin Marshall (Pike County), Alex Mason (Fairfield), Kwesi Mitchell (Hoover), Akeem Norwood (Buckhorn), Kyle Otte (Buckhorn), Ken Perry (Tuscaloosa Hillcrest), Franchez Pitts (Loachapoka), Cameron Slusmeyer (Glencoe), William Spight (Jeff Davis), Jeremy Underwood (Fort Payne), and Michael Waldon (Loachopoka).

Out-of-state defensive backs receiving attention from the Crimson Tide include:

Ahmad Black, cornerback from Lakeland, Florida, is 5-10, 175, and has 4.5 speed. Black recorded 75 tackles with six interceptions while playing safety and cornerback. Black was a transfer to Lakeland in 2005, and worked himself into the best team in the state of Florida. Black was named second team all-state, and has scholarship offers from Alabama, Clemson, LSU, Ohio State, Georgia, Florida and Ole Miss.

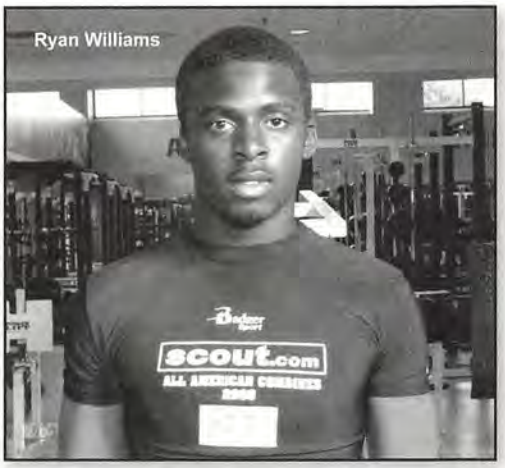
Art Evans broke out as a junior recording 62 receptions for 1,329 yards with 16 touchdowns and intercepted 11 passes on defense scoring two touchdowns. Also, he returned eight punts for touchdowns. He plays both sides of the ball for Evangel Christian School in Lakeland. The 6-1, 175-pound athlete holds scholarship offers from UCF and Duke. He is close friends with Tide cornerback Chris Rogers.

Additional out-of-state defensive backs on the recruiting radar include: Alexander Barnett (Niceville, Florida), Manuel Brand (Ruleville, Mississippi), Brannon Brooks (Elk Grove, California), Sam Edgmon (Giles County, Tennessee), Stefoin Francois (East St. John , Louisiana, who has a Tide offer), Lémarcus Gibson (Central of Harrison, Mississippi), Rashad Henry (Lumberton, Mississippi), Justin Johnson (Berkner, Texas), Jeremy Vaughn (Starkville, Mississippi), Steve Wilks (Lakeland, Florida), and Larry Williams (Forney, Texas). ■

Alabama Top 25

Here are the top high school senior football prospects in Alabama as judged by Scout going into the 2006 season.

1. Sidell Corley	DE	6-4	248	4.85	Mobile (McGill-Toolen)
2. Kerry Murphy	DT	6-4	300	5.1	Birmingham (Hoover)
3. Rolando McClain	LB	6-4	230	4.68	Decatur
4. Brandon Gibson	WR	6-2	190	4.55	Mobile (UMS Wright)
5. Christian Smith	WR	6-2	210	4.5	Birmingham (Huffman)
6. Ryan Williams	CB	5-11	185	4.5	Mobile (B.C. Rain)
7. Michael McNeil	S-WR	6-2	197	4.5	Mobile (Davidson)
8. Ryan Pugh	OL	6-3	275	N/A	Birmingham (Hoover)
9. Nick Fairley	TE	6-4	255	N/A	Mobile (Williamson)
10. Etoro Freeman	LB	6-0	205	4.5	Alex City (Benjamin Russell)
11. Elliott McGaskin	S	6-1	190	4.5	Mobile (B.C. Rain)
12. Phelon Jones	CB	6-0	190	4.38	Mobile (McGill-Toolen)
13. Alfred McCullough	DT	6-3	297	5.1	Athens
14. Nick Gentry	DT	6-3	270	4.78	Prattville
15. William Vlachos	OL	6-2	300	5.1	Mountain Brook
16. Justin Sanders	DT	6-5	270	4.9	New Market (Buckhorn
17. Larry Smith	QB	6-2	200	4.6	Prattville
18. Corey Hart	S-WR	6-2	203	4.6	Loachapoka
20. Rico Sharpe	RB	6-0	190	4.5	Trussville (Hewitt-Trussville)
21. Jeffrey Daniels	LB	6-2	230	4.8	Brantley
22. Jonathan Beasley	LB	6-2	215	4.7	Montgomery (Jeff Davis)
23. Josh Chapman	DE	6-1	280	4.9	Birmingham (Hoover)
24. Terrell Edwards	RB	6-2	210	4.6	Mobile (UMS Wright)
25. Jamison Wadley	DE	6-4	240	4.75	Attallla (Etowah)



Prospects pushing to break into Scout.com Alabama,s Top 25:

Marquez Strickland 6-2, 195, 4.5 WR, Opelika

Lydarius Friend 6-4, 207, 4.7, WR Buckhorn

Stanley Jones 6-0, 176, 4.47, WR Houston Academy

Chris Relf 6-3, 206, 4.8, QB, Carver-Montgomery

Dennis King 5-7, 177, 4.47, RB, Hoover

Henry Porter 6-2, 300, 5.3, OL, Opelika

Drew Traylor 6-4, 220, 4.8, DE, Mountain Brook

Lionel Henderson 6-4, 280, 4.9, DE, Davidson

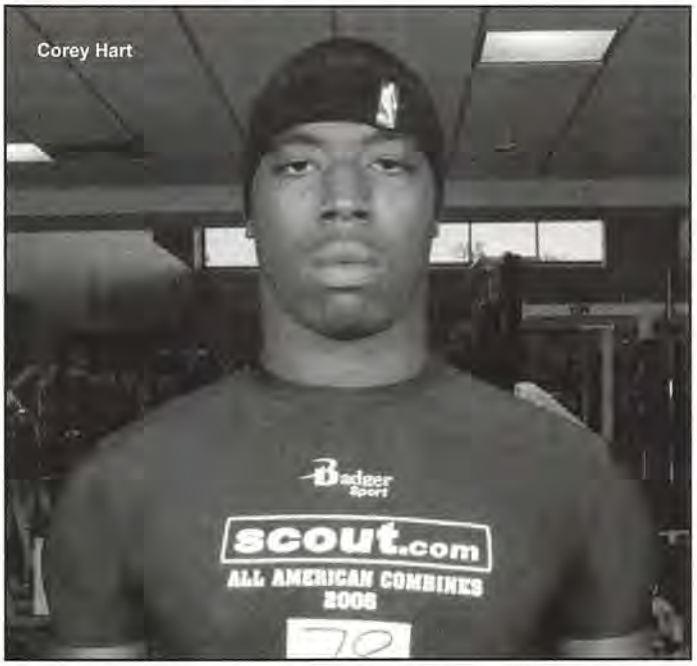
Jared Cooper 6-4, 285, 5.1, OL, W.S. Neal

Broderick Ferguson 6-2, 190, 4.6, S, Jess Lanier

–Andrew Bone

Recruiting Hot List

Name	Pos	Hgt	Wgt	40-time	Hometown (High School)
Allen Bailey	DE	6-4	245	4.8	Darien, Ga. (McIntosh Co. Academy)
Richardo Bates	DB	5-11	170	4.5	Prattville
Jonathan Beasley	LB	6-2	215	4.7	Montgomery (Jeff Davis)
Malcolm Belim	QB	6-3	200	4.59	Calhoun City, Miss.
Jonathan Birmingham	LB	6-0	205	4.65	Alex City (Benjamin Russell)
Ahmad B lack	CB	5-10	170	4.5	Lakeland, Fla.
Steven Black	WR	6-2	205	4.5	Scooba, Miss. (East)
Rickey Booker	LB	6-2	240	4.7	Orlando (Dr. Phillips)
John Brown	DT	6-1	285	N/A	Lakeland, Fla.
Kodi Burns	QB	6-2	190	N/A	Fort Smith, Ark. (Northside)
Justin Byrd	S	6-2	185	4.6	Chatom (Washington Co)
Nate Carlson	WR	6-3	205	4.56	Birmingham (Briarwood Christian)
Lee Chambers	RB	5-10	165	4.5	Coffeeville, Miss.
Josh Chapman	DE	6-1	280	4.9	Hoover
Brandon Clear	WR	6-4	206	4.4	Williamsburg, Va. (Jamestown)
Courtney Coffey	RB	5-10	225	4.6	Hendersonville, Tenn. (John Paul II)
Jeffrey Daniels	LB	6-2	230	4.8	Brantley
Dionte Davis	LB	6-1	225	4.6	Tallahassee, Fla. (Godby)
Roderick Davis	WR	6-0	180	N/A	Memphis (Wooddale)
Michael DeJohn	LB	6-0	220	4.7	Birmingham (Hoover)
Antwon Dixon	WR	6-1	195	4.6	Terry, Miss.
Chris Donald	LB	6-3	220	4.5	Huntingdon, Tenn.
Chris Douglas	RB	5-9	186	4.69	Suwanee, Ga., (Peachtree Ridge)
Sam Edwards	WR	6-2	175	4.55	Pinson (Clay-Chalkville)
Terrell Edwards	RB	6-2	210	4.6	Mobile (UMS Wright)
Art Evans	CB-WR	6-1	175	4.48	Lakeland, Fla. (Evangel Christian)
Mark Fisher	OG-DE	6-4	280	5.3	Madison, Tenn. (Goodpasture)
Demarcus Fox	WR	6-0	180	4.43	Calhoun City, Miss.
Stephon Francois	S	6-2	215	4.5	Reserve, La. (E. St. John)
Etoro Freeman	LB	6-0	205	4.5	Alex City (Benjamin Russell)
Lydarius Friend	WR	6-4	205	4.6	New Market (Buckhorn)
Stephen Garcia	QB	6-3	212	4.7	Tampa (Jefferson)
Nick Gentry	DT	6-3	270	4.78	Prattville
Chip Ghigna	QB	6-3	204	4.7	Homewood
Brandon Gibson	WR	6-2	190	4.55	Mobile (UMS Wright)
Jake Goray	TE	6-4	240	4.8	Ft. Walton Bch, Fla (Choctawhatchee)
Patrick Grant	DE	6-3	215	4.7	Lauderdale Lakes, Fla. (Anderson)
Larry Harris	LB	6-0	189	4.85	Atlanta, Ga. (McNair)
Corey Hart	S-WR	6-2	203	4.6	Loachapoka
Austin Hayes	OL	6-3	240	5.0	Cedar Bluff
Lionel Henderson	OL	6-4	280	4.94	Mobile (Davidson)
Rashad Henry	CB	5-10	165	4.4	Lumberton, Miss.
Herschel Houston	RB	6-0	220	4.6	Centre (Cherokee Co.)
Rodney Hudson	L	6-3	285	5.2	Mobile (B.C. Rain)
Darrius Jackson	DT	5-10	224	4.9	Fairfield
Kyle Jackson	LB	6-1	220	4.85	McDonough, Ga. (Union Grove)
Nathan Jew	RB	5-10	193	4.55	Jackson, Miss. (Jackson Academy)
Roddy Jones	RB	5-8	183	4.58	Chamblee, Ga.
Dennis King	RB	5-7	175	4.45	Hoover
G.J. Kinne	QB	6-1	215	4.6	Canton, Texas
Xavier Lamb	LB	5-11	215	4.7	Tallahassee (Lincoln)
Pat Lazear	LB	6-1	215	4.6	Bethesda, Md. (Walt Whitman)
D.J. Looney	DT	6-2	280	5.3	Birmingham (Oak Mountain)
Keith McCaskill	DE	6-2	220	4.8	Tallahassee, Fla. (Godby)
Rolando McClain	LB	6-4	230	4.68	Decatur
Alfred McCullough	DT	6-3	297	5.1	Athens
Elliott McGaskin	S	6-1	190	4.5	Mobile (B.C. Rain)
*Jermaine McKenzie	WR	6-1	179	4.4	Bradenton, Fla. (Bradenton Academy)
Michael McNeil	S-WR	6-2	197	4.5	Mobile (Davidson)
Travis Means	DB	5-10	175	N/A	Mobile (Davidson)
Kerry Murphy	DT	6-4	300	5.1	Birmingham (Hoover)



Josh Nesbitt	QB	6-1	200	4.55	Greensboro, Ga. (Greene Co.)
Cameron Newton	QB	6-4	215	4.8	Atlanta (Westlake)
Andrew Nowels	QB	6-4	210	4.8	Clearwater, Fla. (Central Catholic)
Chaz Ramsey	OL	6-4	260	N/A	Madison, Miss. (Central)
Darnell Ratcliff	RB	5-11	187	4.5	Chicago (King)
Derric Ross	WR	6-1	180	4.4	Magnolia, Miss. (South Pike)
Chris Ruffin	WR	5-11	165	4.5	New York (Wadleigh)
Rico Sharpe	RB	6-0	190	4.5	Trussville (Hewitt-Trussville)
Zack Shaw,	WR	6-2	190	4.6	Montgomery (Trinity Presbyterian)
Derek Sherrod	OL	6-6	298	N/A	Caledonia, Miss.
Christian Smith	WR	6-2	210	4.5	Birmingham (Huffman)
Isaiah Smith	LB	6-0	220	4.4	Columbia, Tenn. (Central)
Larry Smith	QB	6-2	200	4.6	Prattville
Zach Smith	QB	6-2	190	4.5	Blountsville (Susan Moore)
K.J. Stafford	DE	6-3	240	N/A	LaGrange, Ga.
John Stokes	LB	6-5	225	4.7	Memphis (University)
Marquez Strickland	WR	6-2	195	4.55	Opelika
Golden Tate	WR	6-0	180	4.4	Hendersonville, Tenn. (John Paul II)
Caleb Thomas	OL	6-3	290	5.4	Decatur
Terrence Thomas	LB	6-0	215	4.6	Eufaula
Deonte Thompson	WR	5-11	186	4.28	Belle Glades, Fla. (Central)
Drew Traylor	DE	6-5	220	4.7	Mountain Brook
William Vlachos	OL	6-2	300	5.1	Mountain Brook
Alton Voss	QB	6-3	215	N/A	New Port Richey, Fla. (Gulf)
Jamison Wadley	DE	6-4	240	4.75	Attallla (Etowah)
Chris Walker	LB	6-2	240	4.6	Memphi (Christian Bros.)
Dallas Walker	QB	6-5	201	4.75	Madison, Miss., (Ridgeland Acad.)
Alex Watkins	DE	6-4	225	4.6	Brownsville, Tenn. (Haywood)
Terrence Wilkes	RB	5-8	165	4.45	Wadley
Eric Williams	RB	5-8	170	4.6	Merrillville, Ind.
Marshall Williams	LB	6-2	200	4.68	Lilburn, Ga. (Parkview)
Ryan Williams	CB	5-11	185	4.5	Mobile (B.C. Rain)
James Wilson	OL	6-4	305	N/A	St. Augustine, Fla. (Nease)
Ross Wilson	QB	5-11	180	4.6	Birmingham (Hoover)
Charles Wood	OL	6-4	275	N/A	Gainesville, Ga.
K.J. Wright	DE	6-4	210	4.68	Olive Branch, Miss.
Darius Young	WR	6-1	205	N/A	Shannon, Miss.
Lee Ziemba	OL	6-6	285	N/A	Rogers, Ark.

*Committed to Alabama

By Kirk McNair

Championships, national records define Alabama as one of best

Crimson Tide Tradition

Alabama will concede, as many of its rivals point out, that the Alabama Crimson Tide football team did benefit from having the greatest coach of all time. It is in great part because of the unparallelled career of Paul William "Bear" Bryant as head coach of the Crimson Tide that every Southeastern Conference team has a losing record at the hands of Alabama. He is a major reason that Bama has more national championships than the rest of the SEC teams combined. Alabama is not challenged as the most dominant team in SEC history with 21 championships–as many as LSU, Florida and Auburn combined, more than one-and-a-half times more than runner-up Tennessee.

Alabama sits high above the all-time SEC standings.

Moreover, Alabama is one of that small handful of college football teams that is truly national. Notre Dame, of course. Oklahoma, Texas, Southern Cal, Michigan, Ohio State, and Penn State are there. Teams like FSU, Miami, Nebraska and Tennessee lurk just outside the elite.

The Bryant record is mind-boggling, even more than 20 years after his death. He was head coach at Maryland (6-2-1 in 1945), Kentucky (60-23-5, 1946-53), Texas A&M (25-14-2, 1954-57) and Alabama (, 1958-82232-46-9) was 323-85-17. His Alabama teams won 13 SEC championships and he also won a league title at Kentucky. His Bama teams won six national championships, in 1961, 1964, 1965, 1973, 1978 and 1979. His Bama record included a 25-0 mark in homecoming games. Alabama was 72-2 in games at Bryant-Denny Stadium (and had a 57-game Tuscaloosa winning streak), 68-15-5 at Birmingham's Legion Field. The Alabama teams of 1977-80 were the first in NCAA history to win 44 games in four years. His Bama squads made 24 consecutive bowl trips, including seven Sugar Bowls, five Orange Bowls, four Cotton Bowls, four Liberty Bowls, two Bluebonnet Bowls and one Gator Bowl.

Bryant was named National Coach of the Year in 1961, 1971 and 1973. He was inducted into the National Football Foundation and Hall of Fame when first eligible in 1983. He was SEC Coach of the Year ten times, nine at Alabama, and was selected as the SEC Coach of the 20th Century.

Of his 25 Alabama teams, 13 won ten or more games. In addition to the national championships, Alabama finished in the nation's top ten an astonishing 19 times under Bryant.

It's no wonder that a core of college football fans still revere him, that the Bryant Museum on the campus of The University of Alabama draws thousands of visitors each year, and that books are still written about him.

But Alabama has a history of over 80 years of excellent football in addition to the Bryant years, much of it based on Rose Bowl success.

That was brought home last bowl season.

Anyone who watched the entire Rose Bowl game–and surely that was most college football fans–saw one of the most entertaining games of all time, made even more meaningful considering that the national championship was on the line. The game has been called by some the greatest national championship game ever. Texas win over USC had great athletes making great plays, at least on offense. And it had drama, going to the final seconds before the outcome was determined.

As to whether it was the greatest national championship game ever? Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

In the summer of 1970, Bryant was asked a question about the Crimson Tide's 33-32 win over Archie Manning and Ole Miss in 1969. That thrilling game was considered by fans and media to be one of the all-time greatest as Manning and Bama's Scott Hunter battled back-and-forth before the Crimson Tide finally held in the final minutes.

Bryant's assessment: "One of the worst football games I've ever been associated with." One can imagine that Bryant and Neyland and Donahue and Oliver and Kines would be among those thinking last season's Bowl Championship Series title game was missing an important aspect of football–defense. Not to mention kicking game snafus, an unforced fumble by the Heisman Trophy winner Reggie Bush, and coaching blunders not by unheralded Texas Coach Mack Brown, but by USC's supposed wizard, Pete Carroll.

Most of those assessing the Rose Bowl in the history of national championship games on national networks seem to have the belief that college football started in the late 1980s or early 1990s.

Prior to 1965, the wire services–Associated Press and United Press International–selected the national champion based on regular season play. Alabama won the 1964 national championship, but then lost to Texas in a controversial Orange Bowl when officials determined Tide quarterback Joe Namath did not get across the goalline in the final moments.

The next year the AP announced with great pomposity that it would now include bowl game results in its national championship determination. That proved to be a great stroke

of luck for Alabama. And the Tide took advantage of the opportunity.

When LSU upset number two Arkansas in the Cotton Bowl and UCLA defeated number one Michigan State in the Rose Bowl, that made the Orange Bowl–played in prime time–the national championship game.

Alabama was far more dominating than the final score of 39-28 might suggest, and the Tide was voted number one.

The next year, in deference to Notre Dame, which did not go to bowl games in those days, the AP reversed field and decided it would crown its national champion based on regular season play only. Notre Dame played to a 10-10 tie with Michigan State, a cowardly plan that would have brought ridicule to any team other than the Fighting Irish, but which brought the national championship to Notre Dame. Meanwhile, Alabama was sailing through an undefeated, untied season that culminated with a meaningless (insofar as the national championship was concerned) 34-7 Sugar Bowl win over Nebraska.

Alabama's next national championship bowl game was a great disappointment in an otherwise extraordinary season. In 1971, after back-to-back five-loss seasons, Bryant switched Bama from a pro-style offense to the wishbone. Everyone knows the story of Alabama opening the season against number one USC in Los Angeles and defeating the Trojans, 17-10. From there it was on to an 11-0 regular season, including a 31-7 win over undefeated Auburn at the end of regular season play. That put Alabama number two in the polls and matched against Nebraska in the Orange Bowl.

This time it was Nebraska coming out on top, romping to a 38-6 win and winning the national championship.

While the AP was now firmly committed to a post-bowl poll, UPI continued to award its hardware based on regular season results. In 1973 that meant undefeated Alabama was UPI's national champion. But to win all the other national championship awards, including the more widely-recognized AP title, Alabama would have to defeat Notre Dame in the Sugar Bowl.

A measure of how big the game was came in commentary prior to the Southern Cal-Texas Rose Bowl last January. Beano Cook, the venerable college football analyst, was asked if there had ever been a game to match the 2006 Rose Bowl. He didn't hesitate. Pointing out that hype in 1973 was nothing as compared to today, he named the Sugar Bowl, Alabama and Paul Bryant against Notre Dame.

Alabama and Bryant's first game against Notre Dame was considered the game of all time, and the contest lived up to its billing. Both teams were excellent and the Irish won the game with a gutsy and successful play. Backed up to their goalline and facing third and long, quarterback Tom Clements passed to tight end Robin Weber and Weber made his only reception of the year, a 35-yard gain that enabled Notre Dame to salt away a 24-23 decision.

For decades, that game film has been the most requested from the Sugar Bowl. It supplanted the previous most-requested, Duke's 29-26 win over Bama's valiant War Babies on January 1, 1945.

Alabama thought it had turned a highly-publicized Sugar Bowl victory into another national championship at the end of the 1977 season. The Tide was ranked third going into the bowl games and Texas was number one. Alabama and Bryant, the winningest coach in the nation at the time, was going against Ohio State and Woody Hayes, who was second to Bryant in victories.

Alabama rolled to a 35-6 win and 11-1 record. The lone loss had been by a touchdown to Nebraska in Lincoln early in the year and the Crimson Tide had defeated number one ranked Southern Cal in Los Angeles. And when fifth-ranked Notre Dame–which had lost during the year to a woeful Ole Miss–defeated number one Texas, it was thought that the Crimson Tide would be number one.

But the power of Notre Dame among national media is strong, and the Irish poll vaulted Alabama in one of the closest and most controversial votes in history.

As USC went for its third consecutive national championship this season, it was often pointed out that Alabama came close to the feat twice. Bama's 1966 team was denied by a blemished Notre Dame, and the Tide's 1977 team–which would be followed by national championship squads in 1978 and 1979–was also edged by the Fighting Irish in AP voting.

In 1978, Alabama fought back from a loss to Southern Cal to rise to number two in the nation. That put Bama and Bryant against another traditional power, Penn State, and another legendary coach, Joe Paterno, in the Sugar Bowl. Anyone who saw the game remembers it as one of the most tenseimaginable, every play seemingly the play that would mean the difference between victory and defeat. And most remember the fourth down play of Penn State at the Alabama goalline as that play. Alabama held three times at the one-yard line and Bama's 14-7 win was good for the national title.

There wasn't much drama as Alabama repeated in 1979. The Tide moved into the number one spot after a 40-0 win over Florida in Gainesville early in the season and went on to an undefeated season, outscoring opponents 383-67, including an easy 24-9 win over Lou Holtz's Arkansas Razorbacks in the Sugar Bowl.

Alabama has had only one national championship bowl opportunity since, and it was a great one from a Crimson Tide standpoint. Coach Gene Stallings 1992 Bama was a heavy underdog to Miami, featuring Heisman Trophy winning quarterback Gino Toretta. But the Tide–unlike Texas and USC in this year's Rose Bowl–had a defense, and Bama used it to overwhelm the Hurricanes, 34-13, completing a 13-0 season and bringing more national championship hardware to Tuscaloosa.

Alabama's national championship games were not much like the Texas-Southern Cal game. To many, though, several of them were better football.

Alabama claims 12 national championships–ait could be as many as 18 according to some sources, while Bama's rivals claim the Tide has no more than six–as if that isn't very many. However they are counted, Alabama ranks among the national leaders in national titles.

While the focus in early January was naturally on the Texas-Southern Cal game for the national championship, there was a surprising emphasis among national media on Alabama facing Texas Tech in the Cotton Bowl. Although the Cotton Bowl elected not to buy its way into the BCS and thus doesn'thave the luster it once did, it is still a respected bowl game. And because Texas Tech had such a high-powered offense, many expected Alabama's highly-ranked defense to finally meet its match.

That didn't happen, of course. The Red Raiders scored a late touchdown, but Alabama scored a later field goal–on the last play of the game–to win the Cotton Bowl, 13-10.

And throughout the day one of the high points of sports coverage was reminding the nation of Alabama's fabulous record–the national leader in bowl games played (53), bowl games won (30), and in seasons with 10 or more victories (28).

What a tradition. ■

Alabama Bowl History

APPEARANCES: 53 RECORD: 30-20-3

SEASON	BOWL	RESULT	FINAL RECORD	AP RANK
1925	1926 Rose	UA 20, Washington 19	10-0-0	N/A
1926	1927 Rose	UA 7, Stanford 7	9-0-1	N/A
1930	1931 Rose	UA 24, Washington State 0	10-0-0	N/A
1934	1935 Rose	UA 29, Stanford 13	10-0-0	N/A
1937	1938 Rose	California 13, UA 0	9-1-0	4
1941	1942 Cotton	UA 29, Texas A&M 21	9-2-0	20
1942	1943 Orange	UA 37, Boston College 21	8-3	10
1944	1945 Sugar	Duke 29, UA 26	5-2-2	NR
1945	1946 Rose	UA 34, Southern Cal 14	10-0-0	2
1947	1948 Sugar	Texas 27, UA 7	8-3	6
1952	1953 Orange	UA 61, Syracuse 6	10-2	9
1953	1954 Cotton	Rice 28, UA 6	6-3-3	13
1959	1959 Liberty	Penn State 7, UA 0	7-2-2	10
1960	1960 Bluebonnet	UA 3, Texas 3	8-1-2	9
1961	1962 Sugar	UA 10, Arkansas 3	11-0-0	1
1962	1963 Orange	UA 17, Oklahoma 0	10-1-0	6
1963	1964 Sugar	UA 12, Mississippi 7	9-2-0	8
1964	1965 Orange	Texas 21, UA 17	10-1-0	1
1965	1966 Orange	UA 39, Nebraska 28	9-1-1	1
1966	1967 Sugar	UA 34, Nebraska 7	11-0-0	3
1967	1968 Cotton	Texas A&M 20, UA 16	8-2-1	8
1968	1968 Gator	Missouri 35, UA 10	8-3-0	17
1969	1969 Liberty	Colorado 47, UA 33	6-5-0	NR
1970	1970 Bluebonnet	UA 24, Oklahoma 24	6-5-1	NR
1971	1972 Orange	Nebraska 38, UA 6	11-1-0	4
1972	1973 Cotton	Texas 17, UA 13	10-2-0	7
1973	1973 Sugar	Notre Dame 24, UA 23	11-1-0	4
1974	1975 Orange	Notre Dame 13, UA 11	11-1-0	5
1975	1975 Sugar	UA 13, Penn State 6	11-1-0	3
1976	1976 Liberty	UA 36, UCLA 6	9-3-0	11
1977	1978 Sugar	UA 35, Ohio State 6	11-1-0	2
1978	1979 Sugar	UA 14, Penn State 7	11-1-0	1
1979	1980 Sugar	UA 24, Arkansas 9	12-0-0	1
1980	1981 Cotton	UA 30, Baylor 2	10-2-0	6
1981	1982 Cotton	Texas 14, UA 12	9-2-1	7
1982	1982 Liberty	UA 21, Illinois 15	8-4-0	NR
1983	1983 Sun	UA 28, SMU 7	8-4-0	15
1985	1985 Aloha	UA 24, Southern Cal 3	9-2-1	13
1986	1986 Sun	UA 28, Washington 6	10-3-0	9
1987	1988 Hall Of Fame	Michigan 28, UA 24	7-5-0	NR
1988	1988 Sun	UA 29, Army 28	9-3-0	17
1989	1990 Sugar	Miami 33, UA 25	10-2-0	9
1990	1991 Fiesta	Louisville 34, UA 7	7-5-0	NR
1991	1991 Blockbuster	UA 30, Colorado 25	11-1-0	5
1992	1993 Sugar	UA 34, Miami 13	13-0-0	1
1993	1993 Gator	UA 24, North Carolina 10	9-3-1	14
1994	1995 Citrus	UA 24, Ohio State 17	12-1	5
1996	1997 Outback	UA 17, Michigan 14	10-3	11
1998	1998 Music City	Virginia Tech 38, UA 7	7-5	NR
1999	2000 Orange	Michigan 35, UA 34 (OT)	10-3	8
2001	2001 Independence	UA 14, Iowa State 13	7-5	NR
2004	2004 Music City	Minnesota 20, UA 16	6-6	NR
2005	2006 Cotton Bowl	UA 13, Texas Tech 10	10-2	8

Undefeated, untied Bama teams winning major bowl games and some form of National Championship

By Mitch Dobbs

Tide's football home has been expanded to over 92,000 for the 2006 season

Bryant-Denny Stadium

Bryant-Denny Stadium never had a workout like it will get this season. With eight home games, and one of the country's largest stadiums, Bryant-Denny will experience more traffic than any time in its 77-year history.

Once the on-campus sidekick stadium to Birmingham's larger, then prestigious Legion Field, Bryant-Denny Stadium has moved way up in the world.

Mike Shula's first game as Head Coach was Alabama's last game ever at Legion Field, and as it became clear that the Crimson Tide would opt for Bryant-Denny Stadium exclusively, expansion and improvement took on greater importance.

Fortunately, The University of Alabama, led by Athletics Director Mal Moore, has done what it takes to keep up with the Joneses in stadium renovations, starting from the ground up–literally. Part of the stadium expansion is a brand new locker room on field level for the Crimson Tide football team. The locker room sits at the end of a long hallway pouring right out of the center of the north end zone. The visiting team will move into the "old" Alabama locker room.

A little more noticeably, there will be an upper deck on the north end zone that will raise capacity at Bryant-Denny to 92,148, making it the eighth-largest stadium in college football. But its about improvement–not just enlargement. The upper deck is shaped to create better viewing angles and a livelier atmosphere. Below the upper deck two levels of skyboxes will bring the total number of luxury boxes to 121.

Club level seating below the skyboxes are also an attractive new feature. The club seats will allow access to a common plaza area that overlooks University Boulevard, and will have an outdoor and indoor section.

Not only is the north end zone getting an addition, but the rest of the stadium gets a facelift to go along. Five new elevators in total have been installed, and re-painting and improved lighting in the lower levels will be noticeable.

In addition to the current JumboTron at the South end of the stadium, Bama willhave two new large video boards in the Northeast and Northwest corners. Also, four-foot high ribbons of message boards will span the lengths of the East and West sides.

"We play our home games in one of the finest football facilities in the nation," Moore said. "The atmosphere is second-to-none."

Bryant-Denny Stadium has been the home of Alabama football since 1929 and was first known as the George Hutchenson Denny Stadium, honoring the longtime president of The University. The state legislature renamed the stadium "Bryant-Denny Stadium" in 1975 to honor its most famous football coach. Denny Stadium opened on September 28, 1929, and was officially dedicated the following week at Homecoming ceremonies.

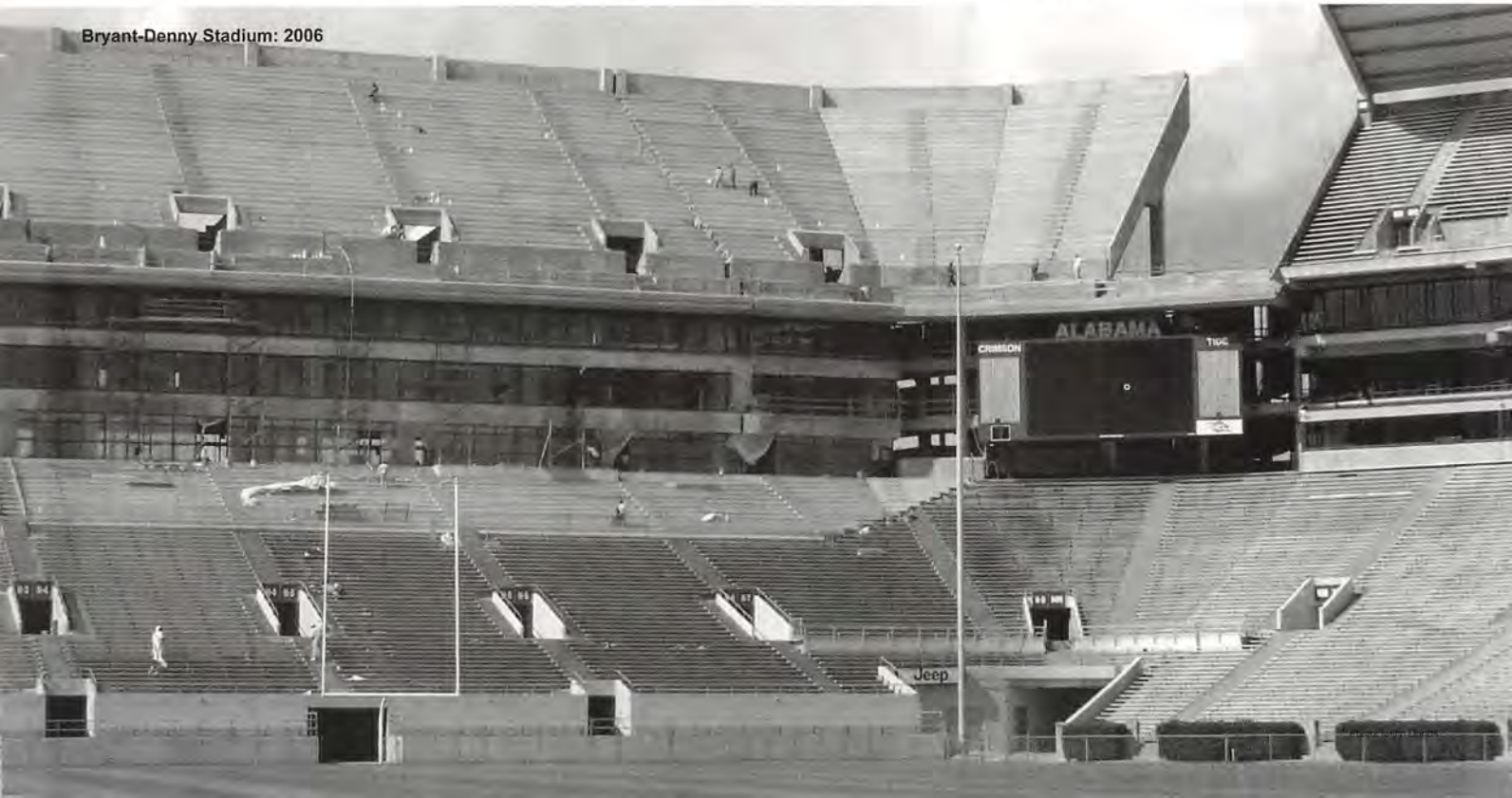
In 1937 the first expansion of the stadium took place as 6,000 seats were added on the east side and brought capacity to 18,000. In 1950, capacity grew to 25,000. In 1961, the grandstands reached 61 rows and capacity was 43,000. The capacity grew to 60,000 in 1966 and then to 70,123 in 1988.

An expansion completed in August of 1998, moved capacity to 83,818 by adding the east side upper deck. The new deck provided 10,000 additional bleacher seats and 81 skyboxes on two levels. The skyboxes were built in two sizes: 24-seat capacity (18) and 16-seat capacity (63).

In 1999, four additional skyboxes were built to bring total skybox capacity to 85. A scoreboard with video display capabilities was erected in the south endzone, as well as new light towers for the east side of the stadium. A new new east side entrance tower, a brick facade, and reception areas for the Scholarship and A-Club level patrons was also added during the 1998 expansion.

Prior to Bryant-Denny Stadium being built, the Tide played on the Quad (1893-1914), Denny Field (1915-1917 and 1919-1928). Those years represent a total of 53 games for which Bama posted a 44-9 record. There were two different sites used on the Quad, the first located on the southeast corner, with the field running parallel to Sixth Avenue. Around the turn of the century, the field was moved 90-degrees to the west to run parallel to University Boulevard.

In 1915, games were played on University Field, renamed Denny Field in 1920, where the Tide played for the next 14 years. Alabama posted a 43-2 record on that field and held opponents scoreless in 35 of those games. Denny Field was two blocks east of the current stadium, behind Little Hall. Mallet Hall and Parker-Adams Hall now stand on the north endzone of Denny Field. A parking lot covers the rest of what remains of Denny Field. ■



Bryant-Denny Stadium: 2006

BY THE NUMBERS

All-Time Southeastern Conference Standings

School	Years	Games	Won-Lost-Tied	Pct.
ALABAMA	72	504	*335-149-20	.685
Tennessee	72	464	*297-148-19	.661
Georgia	73	464	270-180-14	.597
LSU	72	469	256-191-22	.569
Florida	72	455	251-189-15	.568
Auburn	72	483	263-202-18	.563
Mississippi	72	459	229-215-15	.515
Arkansas	14	112	*50-60--2	.455
South Carolina	14	112	*43-68-1	.388
Mississippi State	72	469	*152-305-12	.337
Kentucky	72	463	140-311-12	.315
Vanderbilt	71	471	*111-343-18	.255
Former Members				
Georgia Tech	31	194	115- 70- 9	.616
Tulane	33	195	69-113-13	.387
Sewanee	8	37	0- 37- 0	.000

SEC Championships By Schools

ALABAMA–21 ('33-34t-37-45-53-61t-64-65-66t-71-72-73-74-75-77-78-79-81t-89t-92-99)

Tennessee–13 ('38-39t-40-46t-51t-56-67-69-85-89t-90-97-98)

Georgia–12 ('42-46t-48-59-66t-68-76t-80-81t-82-02-05)

LSU–9 ('35-36-38-61t-70-86-88t-01-03)

Florida–6 ('91-93-94-95-96-00)

Ole Miss–6 ('47-54-55-60-62-63)

Auburn–6 ('57-83-87-88t-89t-04)

@Georgia Tech–5 ('39t-43-44-51t-52)

@Tulane–3 ('34-39t-49)

Kentucky–2 ('50-76t)

Mississippi State–1 ('41)

Vanderbilt–0

Arkansas–0

South Carolina–0

@Sewanee–0

@Denotes former member of SEC

BY THE NUMBERS

All-Time Winningest Schools

	Team	W	L	T	Pct.
1.	Michigan	849	280	36	.744
2.	Notre Dame	811	266	42	.744
3.	Texas	803	307	33	.717
4.	ALABAMA	*774	301	43	.712
5.	Oklahoma	755	291	53	.711
6.	Ohio State	774	301	53	.710
7.	Nebraska	801	321	40	.707
8.	Southern Cal	732	299	54	.700
9.	Tennessee	759	318	55	.695
10.	Penn State	771	339	42	.688

All-Time Bowl Victories

1.	**ALABAMA**	30
2.	Southern Cal	28
3.	Penn State	24
	Oklahoma	24
	Tennessee	24
6.	Georgia	22
	Nebraska	22
	Texas	22
	Georgia Tech	22
10.	Mississippi	19
	Florida State	19
12.	Michigan	18
	Ohio State	18
	LSU	18
15.	Miami	17
	Auburn	17

All-Time Bowl Appearances

1.	**ALABAMA**	53
2.	Texas	45
	Tennessee	45
4.	Southern Cal	44
5.	Nebraska	43
6.	Georgia	41
7.	Oklahoma	39
8.	Penn State	38
9.	LSU	37
	Ohio State	37
	Michigan	37
12.	Arkansas	34
	Georgia Tech	34
	Florida State	34
15.	Florida	33

All-Time Wins

1.	Michigan	849
2.	Notre Dame	811
3.	Texas	803
4.	Nebraska	801
5.	**ALABAMA**	*774
	Ohio State	774
7.	Penn State	771
8.	Tennessee	759
9.	Oklahoma	755
10.	Southern Cal	732
11.	Georgia	693
12.	LSU	669
13.	Syracuse	665
14.	Auburn	657
15.	Colorado	645

**Includes 8 on-the-field Alabama victories and 1 tie listed as losses from 1993 season, games the NCAA forced Alabama to forfeit.*

Hawaii

Continued from Page 54

were 119 Division IA teams.

Up front, Michael Lafaele starts in the middle, with Kaela Watson at tackle. Hawaii uses mostly control techniques up front, meaning statistics for those players are minimal. Unfortunately, experience is also minimal, thanks to the graduation of three prime contributors. Clarence Tuioti-Mariner, Fale Laeli and Daniel Tautofi are the most likely names to step into the gap.

At linebacker, big things are expected of converted defensive end Karl Noa. He'll join Tyson Kafentzis, Brad Kalilimoku and Timo Paepule. The group is light on experience.

The secondary is light on experience, size and talent. Guyton Galdeira, a 5-7walk-on, could end up starting at cornerback across from junior A.J. Martinez. Hawaii is awaiting word on whether Ryan Keomaka or Keao Montielh will be allowed to rejoin the team in the fall after running into off-field trouble. Kenny Patton, a senior, has experience at corner but could find himself at safety, where the top four players from last year must all be replaced. George Perry could have the inside track for the other safety slot.

Senior Kurt Milne returns at punter, but his leg is just average. Kicker Dan Perry made 10-of-15 field goals but missed three extra points in 2005.

Hawaii will be a dangerous offensive team from the start of the year, as most of the key players return from last year's 11th-ranked offense. Defensively, Hawaii has as many or more questions than does Alabama. This will be a tougher opening test for the Crimson Tide than many people think. ■

Vanderbilt

Continued from Page 55

Defensively, Vanderbilt has historically struggled to match up size-wise with its SEC brethren along the defensive line. Ray Brown and Theo Horrocks, the projected starters at tackle, buck that trend by averaging 295 pounds. Chris Booker, at 260 pounds, is tough to handle at defensive end. The other end position is up in the air, with David Carter and Broderick Stewart the likely choices. Stewart, at barely 220 pounds, will have to make plays with his speed.

Moses Osemwegie is gone to the NFL, but MLB Jonathan Goff figures to continue the Vandy tradition of solid linebacker play. Kevin Joyce is a force when he's healthy and consistent, which isn't often enough. Marcus Buggs won the other job with a strong spring. Three redshirt freshmen–Brandon Bryant, and particularly Chris Johnson and Quavian Lewis–have turned heads in the spring, but they'll be green when SEC play starts.

The secondary is a little unsettled. Strong safety Reshard Langford had a strong spring and looks like the early leader of this unit. Jared Fagan and Josh Allen are the early favorites to win the cornerback jobs, but they're being pushed by Joel Caldwell and the appropriately named Darlron Spead. Sean Dixon has experience but has been hurt. Free safety looks like the property of Ryan Hamilton now, but he is untested.

Punter-kicker Bryant Hahnfeldt missed most of the spring with injury, but averaged 41.1 yards per punt last year and was solid on field goals. Earl Bennett is the top return man on both kicks and punts, but he put up just mediocre numbers in 2005.

Vanderbilt isn't expected to be a player in the SEC East in 2006. The Commodores open at Michigan the week before the Alabama game and figure to still be getting their offense put together by the time they visit Tuscaloosa. Defensively, they can be hurt through the air. ■

Louisiana-Monroe

Continued from Page 56

one side, but the other end–Travis Eickman–weighs in at only 205 pounds. Most of the reserves are also undersized players who must score with speed instead of bulk. In the middle, junior Ricky Williams has some playing experience, but DeMarcus Carmouche needs snaps. They're backed up by walk-ons, a transfer and a redshirt freshman.

Louisiana-Monroe plays five defensive backs out of its base 4-2-5 set, meaning there are only two linebackers. Senior Harry Bradley is the most experienced player on defense, and he'll start next to another experienced player, former backup Josh Alexander. Depth is better here than at the front.

Three starters return in the secondary, led by senior safety Kevin Payne. Chris Freeman moved to offense and Shelton Williams graduated, leaving slots for Austin Willis and Josh Thompson, although neither has much experience. Jared Frost will take over for Willis if he's healthy in the fall. Junior corner Chaz Williams is a quality player, but he'll have a new starting mate in Quintez Secka, a career backup. Depth is average, but ULM can field a capable dime package if needed.

In 2005, ULM couldn't stop the run (100th nationally), but was acceptable against the pass (48th) for a total defense ranking of 77th. The Indians/Warhawks were just 92nd in scoring defense, however, with both SEC teams they faced (Georgia and Arkansas) putting up 44 points each. ULM held the opposition under 20 points only twice.

Ragan Walters and Cole Wilson will continue to compete for the placekicking job through the season. Both were perfect on PATs in 2005, but combined to make only 7-of-12 field goal attempts. They were accurate on short and midrange kicks, though, going a combined 6-for-7 from inside 40 yards. Punting will be difficult, with safety Kevin Payne doubling as the punter. Alabama figures to get what it bargained for when it scheduled this team–an easy victory. ■

Arkansas

Continued from Page 57

maddeningly inconsistent recently. Things got better as the 2005 season went along, but graduation stripped out the back seven.

Jamal Anderson and Anthony Brown figure to get the first look at defensive end, with Antwain Robinson, Michael Hall and DéAndre Bryant off the bench. Marcus Harrison and Keith Jackson will start at tackle, with Ernest Mitchell, Marcus Shavers and Fred Bledsoe the top reserves.

Linebacker presents some problem because of numbers. Desmond Sims moved to middle linebacker from defensive end, which will allow Sam Olajabutu to get outside, where he's more effective. Weston Dacus and Freddie Fairchild are in the mix for the other outside slot, along with Brandon Sturdivant. But that's basically all there is.

The secondary must also replace several players, with cornerback Michael Grant pegged as the next star. Randy Kelly and Kevin Woods have experience at safety, but need more consistency. Michael Coe and Chris Houston will fight it out for the other cornerback slot. Coe, in particular, has been a thorn in Alabama's side.

The special teams will be solid, with Jacob Skinner's booming leg at punter giving the Razorbacks a weapon when they need to get out of a hole. The return game is good, but placekicker could be an issue if Steven Arnold or Jeremy Davis can't nail the position down quickly.

Arkansas will be a physical football team, but not much else is known right now. With changes in the coaching staff, Alabama could catch Arkansas in transition and balance out the Hogs' home field advantage. ■

Florida

Continued from Page 58

middle with Marcus Thomas and Ray McDonald. Steven Harris will be a valuable competitor if he can get off-field issues resolved in time for the fall. At end, Joe Cohen is unbeatable when he's on, which isn't often enough. Derrick Harvey is the likely starter opposite Cohen. Clint McMillian, Jarvis Moss and Javier Estopinan provide depth across the line. Injuries were problematic in the spring.

At linebacker, the man to watch is Brandon Siler, who has drawn comparisons to DeMeco Ryans. He'll start in the middle, with Earl Everett on one side and likely Jon Demps or Brian Crum on the other. There is speed and athleticism to burn, but only Siler has shown consistency.

The secondary is essentially rebuilding for 2006. Both 2005 cornerbacks, Dee Webb and Vernell Brown, are gone, as is safety Jarvis Herring. That leaves junior Kyle Jackson as the only returning starter in the secondary. Reggie Nelson is the likely starter opposite him, with Terrence Holmes, John Curtis and Tony Joiner the top backups. At cornerback, Avery Atkins and Reggie Lewis locked up positions in the spring. Depth there will come almost exclusively from signees, which is a concern for Florida's coaches.

Both punter Eric Wilbur and kicker Chris Hetland are seniors, and both are expected to be weapons. Wilbur regressed a bit unexpectedly in 2005 and needs to step it up, but Hetland came from essentially nowhere to become one of the SEC's most reliable kickers.

Florida will surely be gunning for Alabama in this game, but unless home field advantage really means as much as people think, and unless Florida changes its mode of attack against the Alabama defense, Urban Meyer and his troops might find even greater disappointment against Alabama in 2006 than it did last year, when Joe Kines and the Crimson Tide defense seemed to have an answer for every problem Florida posed. ■

Duke

Continued from Page 59

Moore will fill in outside, while Clifford Respress will be the primary backup in the middle.

Linebacker should be okay, with Patrick Bailey returning in the middle and Michael Tauiliili at one of the outside spots. The other starter will be new, likely Charles Robinson, Jeramy Edwards or Alex Williams. Depth is decent, but not great.

Cornerback John Talley anchors the secondary. Glenn Williams, Deonto McCormick and Jabari Marshall give the Blue Devils excellent depth there. Chris Davis will start at strong safety, flanked either by one of the backup corners or by Andreas Platt. Duke ranked 36th in pass defense in 2005, but only 103rd in pass efficiency defense. Expect a strong showing from this group in 2006.

Placekicker Joe Surgan can make kicks from anywhere, with range of up to a staggering 60 yards. A new punter must be found, however, to replace Chris Sprague. Safety Chris Davis was listed as the backup at that position last year, but Surgan could do it, or the job could go to a newcomer. Surgan will take over for Sprague on kickoffs.

The Blue Devils can sneak up on people, nearly beating both North Carolina and Navy last year. But the talent level, particularly on offense, just doesn't figure to be good enough to put points up on Alabama. Alabama will find the Duke defense competent, but the lack of depth up front should find Alabama wearing out the Blue Devils in the second half. ■

Ole Miss

Continued from Page 60

a guard. Right guard is up in the air, with James McCoy battling freshman Reid Neely for the spot.

Ole Miss has some flash at running back, with Indiana transfer BenJarvus Green-Ellis the new starter. Ellis is big and stocky (5-11, 220 pounds) and has plenty of experience from his days as a Hoosier. Mico McSwain gives the Rebels a speed option at the position, although he is still a little raw as a running back. Depth drops off considerably after that. Fullback Jason Cook, though, has the makings of a strong SEC player at his position.

Defensively, Ole Miss will have a chore as they replace three-fourths of what was a very solid line. Depth was horrid in the spring, with the Rebels having only nine players for four slots.

Peria Jerry looks like an early favorite to start at tackle, although he played end for much of the spring. Brandon Jenkins, Hayward Howard, Jeremy Garrett and Trey Poole will likely fight for the other slot. At end, Chris Bowers returns as a starter, with Viciente DeLoach his likely counterpart. LaMark Armour and Reterio Brown provide depth.

Linebacker Patrick Willis is one of the SEC's best, with Gary Pack returning at strongside linebacker. Quentin Taylor could be the next Willis, and will get the start at weakside linebacker. Most of the second-teamers have experience, led by Robert Russell and Antonio Turner.

The secondary figures to be up and down. Trumaine McBride has plenty of experience at cornerback, but the other starter, Nate Banks, still struggles at times. Charles Clark, Jamarca Sanford and Bryan Brown hold down the safety slots.

Rob Park returns at punter and figures to get better as he gets older. Kicker is still a mess, with Will Mosley, Matt Hinkle and Robert Bass fighting for the job. None of the three was acceptable last year.

By the time Ole Miss gets to Alabama, Schaeffer ought to be accustomed to his new teammates, but the inexperience of the Rebels O-line and the lack of playmakers in the receiver corps could doom Ole Miss. ■

Tennessee

Continued from Page 61

Matt McGlothlin, will play. At end, Xavier Mitchell and Antonio Reynolds figure to be the new starters, with Robert Ayers the only backup with any experience. Wes Brown and Raymond Henderson should get a chance early in the season.

Depth issues continue at linebacker, where Marvin Mitchell appears to be the go-to player. He'll start in the middle, with Ryan Karl likely taking one of the outside positions. The other outside slot is anyone's guess, with Ellix Wilson, Adam Myers-White, Rico McCoy, James Turner, Andre Mathis and Jerod Mayo the candidates. This could be Tennessee's biggest weakness.

The secondary has several players with experience, but with the Vols ranking just 54th in pass defense and 39th in pass efficiency defense in 2005, improvement is needed. Antwan Stewart and Jonathan Hefney have the safety slots locked up, with depth coming from Demetrice Morley and Jarod Parrish. Jonathan Wade and Inquoris Johnson grabbed the cornerback slots in spring, with Roshaun Fellows a top backup.

James Wilhoit returns for his final season as placekicker, while the Colquitt of the week, Britton, is back at punter. Lucas Taylor has the inside track to return both kicks and punts.

There is little belief that Tennessee will be as bad in 2006 as it was in 2005, but with the holes in the offensive line, linebacker corps, and the quarterback-receiver combination untested under fire, nothing is certain. But one certainty is the Volunteers will be chomping at the bit to "welcome" the Crimson Tide to Knoxville. ■

FIU

Continued from Page 62

where both Gerrod Bodie and Lance Preston are gone from the 2005 squad. Keyonvis Boule, the team's leading tackler in 2005, returns in the middle, along with James Black and Alexander Bostic III outside. Artis Warthen Jr. and Jeremiah Witherspoon will see a great deal of action. Unlike the defensive line, FIU's linebackers have some size to them.

Two new starters must be found in the secondary. Lionell Singleton returns at cornerback and Chris Smith is back at strong safety, but Singleton's position is up for grabs and the two new starters haven't been settled on yet. Zach Davis leads the competition at the other cornerback position, but he is small. Marshall McDuffie, the new free safety, isn't, but he doesn't have a ton of experience, either. He does, though, have an 82-yard interception return on his resume. Depth is better here than other places, as both Robert Mitchell and Kent Henderson have played in games that mattered.

FIU will break in a new placekicker, probably Chris Patullo, last year's punter. Unless Patullo pulls double duty, look for Dustin Rivest or Chris Cook to take over that job.

FIU has talent in spots, but depth is a concern across the board and a lot of key reserves this year will be signees. At some point in the future, this could be a dangerous team. Right now, though, FIU is the ideal Homecoming opponent for the Crimson Tide. ■

Mississippi State

Continued from Page 63

tackle combo in the SEC. Guards Anthony Strauder and Brian Anderson, both average at best, form the clear strength of this troubled unit. Royce Blackledge is the new center.

Defensively, the Bulldogs boast a veteran front. Michael Heard and Titus Brown can go toe-to-toe with any defensive end combo in the league, and Brown is a bona fide pass rushing threat. Deljuan Robinson and Andrew Powell are tough inside, and Avery Hannibal off the bench gives the Bulldogs a disruptive player with a good motor.

Linebacker Quinton Culberson is the Bulldogs' best player on either side of the ball. He'll start in the middle and anchor an active group that includes veteran Gabe O'Neal on the strong side. Jamar Chaney is the new starter at weakside. He has a good combination of size (6-3, 230 pounds) and speed. Depth is good in the middle, with Carlton Rice and Anthony Littlejohn, but suspect outside.

If Pegues returns in the fall, he'll start at one cornerback slot with senior David Heard opposite him. Otherwise, either little-used senior Leron Yarbrough or one of a handful of inexperienced players, probably Adron Chambers, will replace him. Senior Jeramie Johnson leads the secondary from his free safety post, while Fitzhugh–again, a suspended player–was expected to start at strong safety. If he's unavailable, the job falls to either De,Mon Glanton or Demario Bobo.

Overall, the Bulldogs defense, which finished 2005 ranked 29th in total defense nationally, should be similarly effective in 2006.

Senior Keith Andrews is expected to be the placekicker, although Adam Carlson split the position with him last year and could do it again this year. Punter Blake McAdams had a good freshman campaign and returns in 2006.

The Bulldogs will be a scrappy team as long as Croom is the coach. Whether they can be winners in the SEC is another matter. The offense looks to have simply too many holes in 2006 to contend. ■

LSU

Continued from Page 64

Defensively, things could get dicey up front. Chase Pittman and Ryan Willis are the starters at defensive end, but Willis will be pushed by Kirston Pittman and Tremaine Johnson, among others. While experience is light outside, depth is a major concern in the middle. The projected starters, Glen Dorsey and Marlon Favorite, will be strong, but LSU has only one reserve tackle on scholarship, redshirt freshman Lyle Hitt. The rest of the depth will have to come from the signing class, or by moving a reserve end over.

At linebacker, Ali Highsmith goes from being a part-time player to the stud of the group. Given that he isn't as big as the coaches would like, this could be a challenge for Highsmith. Sophomore Darry Beckwith and junior Luke Sanders lead the competition at the other two slots. All three have good speed, but only Sanders has size to go with it. Big Dominic Cooper is the top reserve at all three positions, along with signee Jacob Cutrera. This will be a very young group.

The secondary won't be a problem. LaRon Landry and Jessie Daniels return to give LSU perhaps the best safety combination in the SEC this season. Chevis Jackson will start at one cornerback position. The other will likely be Sammy Joseph, but he needs to get more consistent or risk losing his job. Daniel Francis and Keron Gordon provide great experience off the bench.

Until Jackson returns, LSU coaches will hold their breath. Jackson should be the punter and the long field goal kicker, but will probably yield to Colt David as the short field goal kicker and perhaps Patrick Fisher as the kickoff man. Running back/receiver Trindon Holliday, who stands just 5-6, 155 pounds, is the new kick returner.

LSU will still be a tough team in 2006, but the Tigers will also be young on both lines of scrimmage and vulnerable at linebacker and perhaps running back, depending on the health of the projected starters. A quarterback controversy could also stunt the Bayou Bengals' growth as the season progresses. ■

Auburn

Continued from Page 65

Linebacker could be the key area for Auburn, the difference between solid and average. Kevin Sears goes from being a situational player to the team's bell cow here. He'll start on the strong side next to middle linebacker Tray Blackmon, who has tons of potential but no experience. The real question is whether Will Herring can make the move from safety to weakside linebacker. If he can't, Karibi Dede or Courtney Harden will have to take the reins. As with the line, most of the depth comes from freshmen.

The secondary should be strong at corner, with David Irons and junior college transfer Jonathan Wilhite the starters. The big question marks are the safeties. Eric Brock has to get better, as he's being counted on to be the leader here. The other starting spot is up for grabs, with freshman Aairon Savage, Tristan Davis and Steve Gandy fighting for the job.

Kicker and punter will be strengths. John Vaughn returns at kicker, while Kody Bliss has established himself already as one of the SEC's best punters. Tristan Davis brings his blazing speed to the kick return unit. The only question is who'll return punts; Courtney Taylor had the early inside track, but with his injury history–and his importance to the wide receiver corps–one has to wonder whether that assignment will stick.

Auburn has gotten to the point where it reloads rather than rebuilds, but there are still enough trouble points on both sides of the ball to make the Tigers vulnerable. With the game in Tuscaloosa–and a four-year-old monkey on their backs–the Crimson Tide has a lot to play for here. A win won't come easy. ■

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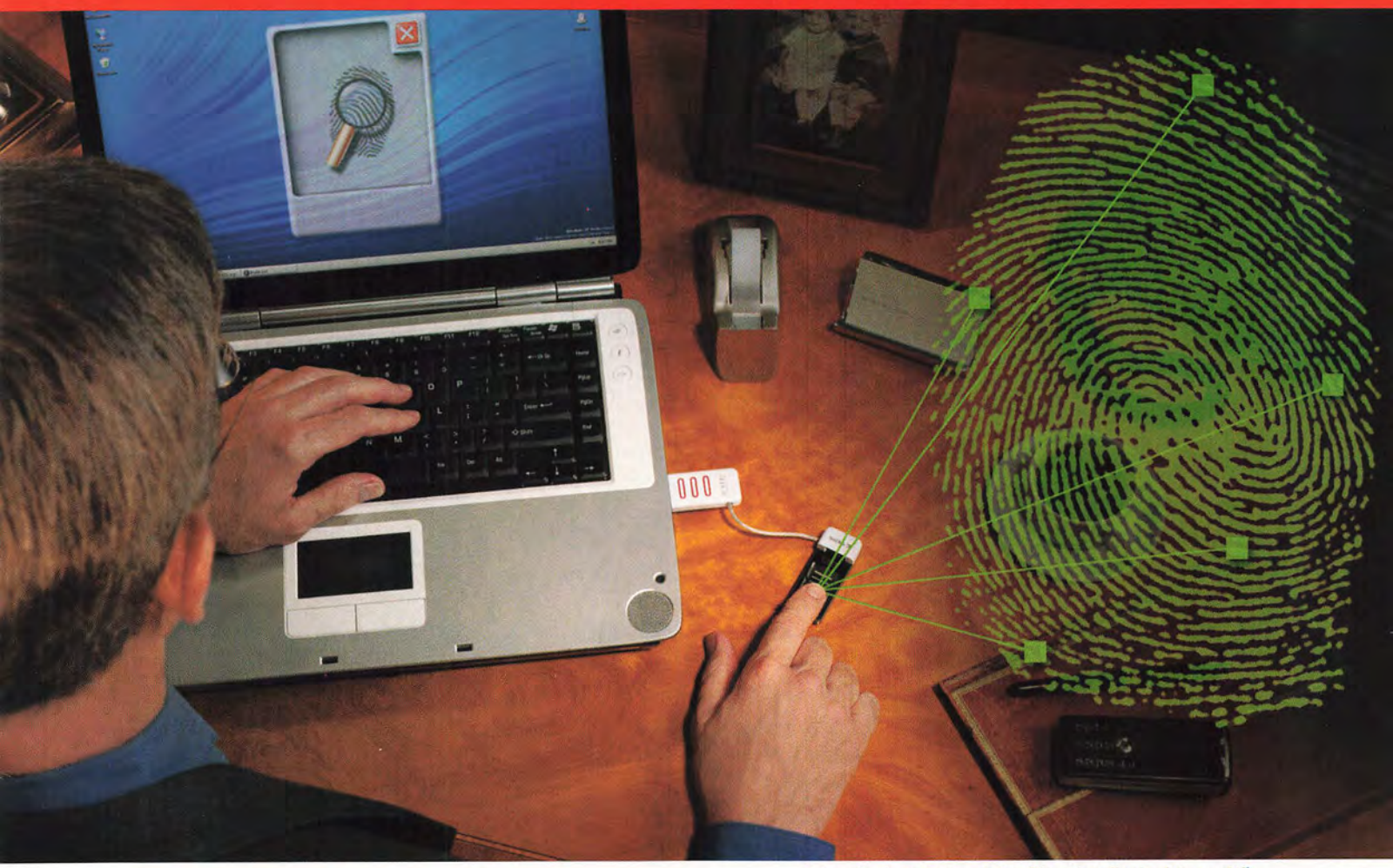

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Alabama Adding Opponents For The Future

he NCAA ruled that beginning this season, 2006, Division 1A college football teams may schedule a 12th regular season game. That sent schools scrambling to find opponents. Alabama has added Duke in Tuscaloosa as its 12th opponent this season. There will be a return game but not until September 18, 2010 and not necessarily at Durham, where Duke has a very small stadium.

This year Alabama will play for 12 consecutive weeks. (Southeastern Conference athletics directors have given their permission for Alabama and Auburn to move their game back a week next season, which allows some flexibility in scheduling.)

Alabama does not have all its 2007 games announced. Although we think this schedule is will be correct, all contracts have not been signed. This schedule does provide for a mid-year (October 27) open date.

Alabama Athletics Director Mal Moore and Florida State Athletics Director Dave Hart (a former Alabama basketball player) arranged for a game on September 29, 2007, at Jacksonville, Florida, in Alltel Stadium. This is a one-game only deal.

In upcoming years, Alabama has scheduled home-and-home games with Penn State in 2010 and 2011 (at Alabama September 11, 2010, and at State College on September 20, 2011); and Georgia Tech in 2012 and 2014 (September 15, 2012, in Tuscaloosa, and September 13, 2014, in Atlanta). Bama is also working on schedules with the likes of Oklahoma, Nebraska and Notre Dame. ■

2007 Alabama Football Schedule

(All 12 games not yet contracted and this schedule is subject to change)

Date	Opponent	Site
September 1	Western Carolina	Tuscaloosa
September 8	Vanderbilt	Nashville
September 15	Arkansas	Tuscaloosa
September 22	Georgia	Tuscaloosa
September 29	Florida State	Jacksonville
October 6	Houston	Tuscaloosa
October 13	Mississippi	Oxford
October 20	Tennessee	Tuscaloosa
October 27	Open	
November 3	LSU	Tuscaloosa
November 10	Mississippi State	Starkville
November 17	Louisiana-Monroe	Tuscaloosa
November 24	Auburn	Auburn
December 1	Southeastern Conference Championship Game	Atlanta

Southeastern Conference 5-1-2 Schedule Format

Southeastern Conference football teams play a 5-1-2 format, meaning that each team plays the other five teams in its division, one permanent opponent from the other division, and two games against inter-division opponents on a rotating basis. For instance, Alabama has one game against each of the other five Western Division opponents (Arkansas, Auburn, LSU, Mississippi, and Mississippi State). The Crimson Tide's permanent opponent from the Eastern Division is Tennessee. This year Alabama also will play Eastern Division teams Florida and Vanderbilt. The rotating opponents are played in two-game series, one home and one away. Last year Alabama played Florida in Tuscaloosa and this year will meet the Gators in Gainesville. Alabama will host Vanderbilt this year, go to Nashville next year. And in 2007, Florida will rotate off the schedule and Georgia will rotate on for two years. This rotation assures that each SEC team will play every conference member no fewer than four times in a 10-year period and that each team will make at least two visits to every SEC stadium during that 10-year period.

The schedule for non-division rotating opponents for Alabama:

2006 and 2011–at Florida, Vanderbilt
2007 and 2012–at Vanderbilt, Georgia
2008 and 2013–at Georgia, Kentucky
2009 and 2014–at Kentucky, South Carolina
2010 and 2015–at South Carolina, Florida

By Kirk McNair

Alabama coach great representative for football and The University

Head Coach Mike Shula

Historically, the head football coach at The University of Alabama has been the most recognized person in the state—better known than the governor or any other politician, more likely to be identified than world-famous doctors or captains of industry. Alabamians not sure of Bob Riley's (he's the governor) political party can tell you the day Mike Shula's (he needs no introduction as the Alabama head football coach) youngest daughter, Ryan, was born. That's because Ryan was born on Signing Day last February 1. In the Shula household, it was an event second only in importance to Andre Smith pulling out the houndstooth hat to announce he was coming to Bama.

Just kidding. Shula was late getting the Smith information in order to be with wife Shari at the birth of the third Shula daughter. She joins Samantha and Brooke.

It is no surprise that Shula makes big news off the field as well as on it.

When recently-graduated linebacker DeMeco Ryans was named winner of the Paul Bryant Award as the top male scholar-athlete at The University, it was pointed out that Shula had won the award following his senior season as Alabama's quarterback. (Bama can be proud that Tide Head Basketball Coach Mark Gottfried is another honoree.)

And this spring there was more big news.

During spring training, Shula and Athletics Director Mal Moore announced that they had reached an agreement on a new contract. A few weeks later, The University released details of the contract.

The contract will pay Shula $1.55 million annually through January 31, 2012. It also includes a one-time signing bonus of $200,000.

A deferred compensation plan of $200,000 per year for the six year contract period has also been added, money that would be paid at the conclusion of the contract, raising the total base value of the contract to $1.75 million.

The University of Alabama Board of Trustees Compensation Committee unanimously approved the new contract, which moved Shula's compensation into the upper third of football coaches within the Southeastern Conference.

Shula's new contract reflects an increase from $150,000 to $200,000 in his base salary and a jump from $750,000 to $1.35 million in talent fees, which are paid by the team's media rights holder.

Shula, who is 41 years old, has posted a 20-17 overall record at Alabama, going 4-9 in 2003, 6-6 in 2004 and 10-2 last season.

He has taken the Tide to back-to-back bowl games, winning the 2006 AT&T Cotton Bowl Classic 13-10 over Texas Tech, and finishing ranked eighth in the country.

The new contract lengthens by two years an extension that was signed following the 2004 season. "We are certainly happy to know that Mike Shula will be our coach for many years to come," Moore said. "As he begins his fourth season at The Capstone, Mike has brought stability and continuity to a program that needed it and has returned a sense of pride and accomplishment to everyone involved with the Alabama football program.

"He has not only produced on the playing field, but his student-athletes have also gotten the job done in the classroom," Moore continued. "Since his arrival in 2003, the football team's graduation rate has seen steady improvement and now stands at 67 percent. A total of 25 football players who participated in Alabama's most recent bowl games had already earned their degrees."

"I am very excited to be at The University of Alabama," Shula said. "I am excited about our future at Alabama and I love The University. This is a great place to live and work. With our new facilities and support areas, our future is very bright. Coach Moore has done an outstanding job of pulling it all together."

Shula has a well-deserved reputation as a recruiter. Of particular importance to all associated with Bama, he is not only successful, he is an outstanding representative for The University. He and Moore are proving to be a great coach-athletics director team, one that gives the Crimson Tide every reason to believe in a very bright future for Alabama football.

2006 'BAMA Football Yearbook

Alabama Coaches' Records

Coach	Years	Won-Lost-Tied	Pct.
E.B. Beaumont	1892	2-2-0	.500
Eli Abbnott	1893-95, 1902	7-12-0	.368
Otto Wagonhurst	1896	2-1-0	.667
Allen McCants	1897	1-0-0	1.000
W.A. Martin	1899	3-1-0	.750
M. Griffin	1900	2-3-0	.400
M.H. Harvey	1901	2-1-2	.600
W.B. Blount	1903-04	10-7-0	.588
Jack Leavenworth	1905	6-4-0	.600
J.W.H. Pollard	1906-09	20-4-5	.776
Guy Lowman	1910	4-4-0	.500
D.V. Graves	1911-14	21-12-3	.625
Thomas Kelly	1915-17	17-7-1	.700
Xen C. Scott	1919-22	29-9-3	.744
Wallace Wade	1923-30	61-13-3	.812
Frank Thomas	1931-46	115-24-7	.812
H.D. Drew	1947-54	55-29-7	.643
J.B. Whitworth	1955-57	4-24-2	.167
Paul W. Bryant	1958-82	232-46-9	.824
Ray Perkins	1983-86	32-15-1	.677
Bill Curry	1987-89	26-10-0	.722
Gene Stallings	1990-96	70-16-1	.810
Mike DuBose	1997-2000	24-23-0	.511
Dennis Franchione	2001-02	17-8-0	.680
Mike Shula	2003–	20-17-0	.541
Totals		782-292-44	.719

With the expansion and remodeling of Bryant-Denny Stadium, Alabama now has a football complex second to none in the nation. The practice facilities include Ithe most modern in strength and conditioning and medical treatment and state-of-the-art meeting and equipment rooms. The practice locker room is nicer than the stadium locker room for most schools. The practice fields include three grass fields and two AstroPlay Turf fields, one indoors. Bryant Hall, the former athletics dormitory, is now one of the nation's most complete academic centers (for all Bama athletes).

Shula is the fifth Alabama alumnus to become head coach, joining J.B. Whitworth (1955-57), Paul W. "Bear" Bryant (1958-82), Ray Perkins (1983-87) and Mike DuBose (1997-2000) as former players turned head coach.

Shula, who was born June 3, 1965, in Baltimore, is among the nation's youngest head football coaches, even though he has been on the job at Bama since May 3, 2003. In that first season he had 115 days to prepare for opening day. He put together a coaching staff that has stayed almost completely intact. Although that first season was predictably tough (4-9), he has followed it up with a 6-6 season (including a Music City Bowl appearance) in 2004 and a 10-2 record and Cotton Bowl championship last year.

Shula can be considered a crown prince in the football coaching world. He is the son of Don Shula, one of the most famous and most successful coaches in professional football history. Mike Shula also has Crimson Tide tradition in him, quarterback of Bama in the 1980s, and quarterback of some of the most thrilling games in Alabama football history.

When Mal Moore announced the selection of Shula as Bama's head

coach, the athletics director addressed Shula's youth. He said, "Mike brings a mixture of youth and experience to our program, while at the same time a 15-year career in the NFL has prepared him for the step he is taking today. It was that mix of enthusiasm, experience, and ties to The University of Alabama that made Mike the perfect fit for this job."

Moore chose Shula over Sylvester Croom, now head coach at Mississippi State, and Richard Williamson, offensive coordinator of the Carolina Panthers. The three are all alumni of The University with extensive NFL experience. Before accepting the job as Alabama's 25th head football coach (and the sixth since Bryant completed his 25-year run in 1982), Shula spent two seasons as quarterback coach for the Miami Dolphins after having been named to that position by Head Coach Dave Wannstedt on February 7, 2000. It marked Shula's second stint with the Dolphins after serving as a coaches, assistant from 1991-92. It was also his second stint with Wannstedt, Shula working as tight ends coach for the Chicago Bears, 1993-95.

When Shula was announced as head coach at Alabama, he said that one thing he had missed as a Crimson Tide player was winning a championship. And, he said, he considered that to be unfinished business.

In Shula's two seasons as quarterbacks coach at Miami, Jay Fiedler led the Dolphins to a 21-10 record as a starter. In 2002, he completed 60.7 percent of his passes, and threw for 3,290 yards and 20 touchdowns. He became just the second quarterback in club history to surpass the 3,000-yard passing mark in a season and the third to tally 20 touchdown passes. His completion percentage was the highest by a Dolphin since 1995.

Shula re-joined the Dolphins organization after spending the previous four years (1996-99) as offensive coordinator with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. The Bucs qualified for the playoffs in two of Shula's four seasons, and in 1999 won the NFC Central Division and reached the NFC Championship game. He got his initial NFL coaching post in 1988 with the Bucs as an offensive assistant. He was promoted to quarterbacks coach in 1990, and spent one year in that post.

Shula was a three-year letterman (1984-86) as a quarterback for the Crimson Tide, and finished his career with a 32-15-1 record, all under Ray Perkins. He was a starter in each of his final three seasons. Shula finished his Tide career completing 313 of 578 passes for 4,069 yards, 35 touchdowns and 30 interceptions.

He is best remembered for leading the Tide to amazing come-from-behind victories in nationally-televised games at the start and finish of 1985. The first was a 20-16 win over Georgia in Athens, the opening game of the season. Down 16-13 with just 50 seconds remaining in the game, Shula marched the Tide 71 yards in five plays for the winning touchdown. Shula threw 17-yards to flanker Al Bell for the score, his second touchdown pass of the evening. At the end of the regular season, Alabama faced off against Auburn in Birmingham's Legion Field. With less than a minute to play, Auburn had moved to a 23-22 lead and Bama was backed up at its own 20. Shula completed passes, he blocked for Bell on a reverse, and then he hit Greg Richardson going across the middle. Richardson dragged an Auburn defender out of bounds, and that set up an Alabama play for the ages, Van Tiffin's 52-yard field goal as time expired for a 25-23 Bama win.

Other big victories orchestrated by quarterback Shula were against Southern Cal (24-3) in the 1985 Aloha Bowl, Ohio State (16-10) in the Kickoff Classic, Notre Dame (28-10) and Washington (28-6) in the Sun Bowl, all in the 1986 season. The win over Notre Dame is the Tide's only win over the Fighting Irish.

He was an All-Southeastern Conference selection as a junior and led the Crimson Tide to victories in the Aloha Bowl and Sun Bowl in his final two seasons. As a junior, he became only the second Alabama quarterback ever to throw for more than 2,000 yards in a season.

He earned his bachelor's degree in labor relations from Alabama. Shula was a 12th-round draft choice of Tampa Bay in 1987 and was on the Bucs' roster for part of the '87 season.

Mike prepped at Miami's Columbus High School where he was an all-state performer his senior season when he led the school to the state championship game. He also earned all-state accolades as a junior. ■

The Mike Shula File

PERSONAL
Born June 3, 1965, in Baltimore, Maryland
He and his wife, Shari, have three daughters, Samantha, Brooke, and Ryan
EDUCATION
University of Alabama, 1987
(Quarterback, lettered 1984-85-86)
COACHING CAREER
Quarterbacks Coach, Tampa Bay Bucs, 1988-90
Coaches Assistant, Miami Dolphins, 1991-92
Tight Ends Coach, Chicago Bears, 1993-95
Offensive Coordinator, Tampa Bay Bucs, 1996-99
Quarterbacks Coach, Miami Dlophins, 2000-02
Head Coach, Alabama, May 8, 2003-Present

By Mitch Dobbs

Crimson Tide's assistant coaches are critical to success

The Assistants

A hodgepodge of men who came from Washington State with Mike Price, new hires made by Price after coming to Alabama, and Mike Shula hires when he took over the program, make up the staff of Alabama assistant football coaches that has melded into model of cohesion.

The off-season produced the first change in what has been a remarkably stable coaching staff under Mike Shula, as Paul Randolph departed for a defensive coordinator/assistant head coaching position at Rice. Randolph was replaced by four-year Vanderbilt assistant David Turner. At Alabama this spring, Turner assumed Randolph's defensive end coaching responsibilities and the same recruiting territory.

"We wanted to make sure we got a person just like Paul as far as character and

David Turner

Joe Kines

David fits that mold and keeps cohesiveness," said Buddy Wyatt, who coaches the defensive tackles and works closely with Turner. "He's learning the package and we can go ahead and expand. We can continue to find new things that are going to help us be a better defensive football team."

Turner is an 18-year veteran of the collegiate ranks, with coaching stints at Minnesota (2001), Virginia (1997-2000), North Carolina State (1995-96), Kentucky (1993-94), James Madison (1991-92), Indiana (Pennsylvania) (1988-89), and his alma mater, Davidson (1985-87).

At Davidson College, Turner was a three-time varsity letterman as a running back. He earned a bachelor's degree in sociology. Turner is married to the former Yvette Modica and the couple has two daughters, Bianca and Alexyia.

Turner recruits Montgomery, Atlanta, Miami and outlying areas.

The architect of that defense is the coordinator and linebackers coach, Joe Kines. Kines was hired by Price away from Florida State, and picked up the added title of assistant head coach shortly after Shula took the helm.

For the second straight year, Kines fielded one of the nation's best defenses. Alabama was first in scoring defense (10.6 points per game) and in the top 10 in every defensive category. Kines has featured a four-man defensive front, but with the relative continuity in his staff, has added to the package with sophisticated 3-4 and 5-2 alignments each year he has been at Alabama.

"It's really helped us to be on the same page for that long," Kines said. "That's a strength. "And David Turner's done a great job of coming in and picking up where Coach Randolph left off."

Kines spent three years at Florida State (2000-2002), and in his extensive career served stints at Georgia (1995-99), Arkansas (1991-94), Tampa Bay Buccaneers (1987-90), Alabama (1985-86), Florida (1979-84), Clemson (1977-78) and Jacksonville State (1972-76).

Coming up in the state of Alabama during the Paul "Bear" Bryant heyday, and serving as the defensive coordinator at

Buddy Wyatt

Chris Ball

Alabama under Ray Perkins gives Kines true Alabama credentials long before his return to The Capstone.

"Ninety-nine percent of kids want to do right," he said. "Sometimes they need help getting pointed in right direction. I think it's important what you do off the field. You came here to represent Alabama, so its important what you do off the field."

At Arkansas, Kines was interim head coach in 1992.

Kines was born in Piedmont Alabama, and graduated from Jacksonville State in 1967. He was a three-year letterman from 1963-65. He earned his master's degree there and began his college coaching career at his alma mater in 1972. He and his wife, Rubye, have a daughter, Susan, and two grandchildren, Matthew and Joshua.

Wyatt was hired from Texas A&M by Mike Price in 2003, and handles the Tide's defensive tackles. His coaching stops include A&M (1999-2002), Colorado (1997-98), Northwestern (1995-96), Oklahoma State (1994), Minnesota (1989-93) and Texas Christian. Wyatt was a defensive lineman at TCU from 1986-89.

"We've got a lot of experience coming back on the defensive line," Wyatt said. "Some of those younger kids need to give us some depth and need to improve and they are working hard, but I think we'll be okay when it's all said and done."

The native of Victoria, Texas, participated in football, basketball and track at Stroman High School, and played professionally for two seasons after finishing at TCU. During his days in Fort Worth, Wyatt was active in many community activities including Meals on Wheels, helping with a disadvantaged youth program as well as the physically handicapped program, and drug awareness and education for youth.

He and his wife, Andrea, have a daughter, Ariel, and a son, Fredrick.

Wyatt's recruiting territory is Northeast Florida, Southern Mississippi, Southwest Alabama, Houston and New Orleans.

Chris Ball coaches Alabama's secondary, and is among the most animated and outgoing members of the staff. Ball has been a large part of coordinating Alabama's highly-rated pass defense for the past two seasons. The Tide was ranked second in pass defense two seasons ago and finished fifth last year.

Ball's resume includes coaching jobs at Washington State (2000-2002, 1989-90), Idaho State (1999), Missouri Western State

Dave Rader

Sparky Woods

(1997-98, 1986), Western Oregon State (1995-96), Coffeyville Community College (1991-94), Akron (1987-88), and Northeast Missouri State (1986-87).

Ball recruits East Central Florida, Middle Tennessee and North Alabama.

Ball is a graduate of Missouri Western State College. He and his wife, Tandi, have one son, Brennan and a daughter, Abigail.

Shula hired Dave Rader to be his offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach in 2003. Shula should have been familiar with Rader's ability, since he was a player when Rader coached quarterbacks and receivers at Alabama through Shula's junior year.

"This is the most unselfish staff I've been around," Rader said. "That all stems from Coach Shula. I thought we were uncannily close our first season and we've grown together since."

Short yardage will be an interesting focus for the Tide offense this year, Rader said.

"For us to be a better offense we have to be a better short yardage team. We're close to being that, and we'll work on that. You still want to be a team that make big plays and lead the league in turnovers given up, too."

Alabama assistant coaches are not permitted to require their players get instruction during the offseason, "but we do ask that they understand there are tools and resources if they want to study," Rader said. "We ask them to stay on top of game and remember things."

Before coming to Alabama with Shula in 2003, Rader had been out of coaching since 1999. His most recent job was as head coach at Tulsa (1988-99), with earlier stints at Tulsa as an assistant (1987), Mississippi State (1986), and Alabama (1983-85).

Rader was born in Wichita, Kansas. He graduated from Rogers High School in Tulsa, where he was a football and baseball standout. He was Tulsa's starting quarterback in 1977 and 1978. Rader earned his bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering from Tulsa in 1980. He went on to quarterback in the NFL, finishing his career with the New York Giants under Ray Perkins...who then hired him to coach at Alabama when Perkins became head coach of the Crimson Tide. Rader and his wife, Janet, have three children, sons Daniel and Jordan and daughter Kendal.

Sparky Woods is the running backs coach, and the third current UA assistant with Division I head coaching experience. He has 29 years of coaching experience to offer as the Crimson Tide's running backs coach, including five as the head coach at South Carolina.

"I see myself as assistant to Coach Shula, and I follow under his philosophy," Woods said. "I hope that I'm a good teacher. I think that players win games and not coaches, but a coach can lose with good players. Tough guys win in this world, hopefully players I coach are mentally and physically tough and that's a reflection of their coach."

Alabama is Woods' fourth stop in the Southeastern Conference. His coaching ledger includes Mississippi State (1999-2002), Virginia (1997-98), Memphis (1995-96), New York Jets (1994), South Carolina (1989-93), Appalachian State (1983-88), Iowa State (1979-82), North Alabama (1978), Kansas (1977) and Tennessee (1976).

Woods brought a wealth of Southeastern Conference recruiting knowledge to the Crimson Tide staff, and he is responsible for East Tennessee, Northern and Central Mississippi, West Central Alabama, South Carolina and Kentucky. He has also drawn out-of-region recruiting assignments such as Chicago, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Woods has a stable full of running backs, highlighted by rising senior Kenneth Darby. Darby will be number one in the fall, but sorting out the rest of the pack will be a priority for Woods.

"I want to make sure we have a second Saturday tailback," he said. "I want to make sure Darby and LéRon (McClain) and Tim (Castille) are healthy and at the right physical shape and ready to go. I'd like for our guys to demonstrate that because we're in a position to be good leaders on the team for the first time. I'd like them to accept responsibility for the team as far as work this summer and prepare for the fall and realizing we're going to have to have 12-game commitment."

Woods is a 1976 graduate of Carson-Newman, and is married to the former Jean Ann Higginbotham. They have two children, daughter Emily and son Casey.

Charlie "Coach Cheese" Harbison is another SEC coaching vet with ties to Alabama. He was hired by Shula to coach receivers in 2003. Harbison guided the Tide's defensive backs previously, and returned from another SEC power.

His coaching resume includes LSU

(2000-01), Alabama (1998-2000), Clemson (1995-97), Texas-El Paso (1994), Charlotte Rage (1993-94), Gardner Webb (1992-93, 1984-85), Raleigh-Durham (1991) and the Charlotte Barons (1990).

During his first stint with the Crimson Tide, Harbison's charges were consistently near the top of the SEC in pass defense and played a key part in Alabama's 1999 SEC Championship run. Former Tide defensive back and first-round NFL selection Fernando Bryant was one of Harbison's pupils in the secondary.

Harbison is a Shelby, North Carolina, native, and he graduated from Gardner-Webb College with a business administration degree where he was a track and football star. His professional playing career included stops with the USFL's Boston Breakers (1983) and New Orleans Breakers (1984).

Harbison's recruiting territory includes Birmingham, East Central Georgia and North Carolina.

Harbison and his late wife Gloria are parents of four children: Charlie, Stedman, Masai and Msiba; daughter-in-law Caroline and grandsons, Masai II and Amari. Gloria died of cancer in 2003.

Dave Ungerer and Mike Shula were acquainted from summer coaching clinics and professional exchanges, and Shula hired Ungerer from Cal in 2003. Ungerer is the Tide's tight ends coach and special teams coordinator.

"I want to make sure players understand what we're trying to do and why," he said. "I want to teach concepts and do it in a positive way. Our big thing now is in the tight ends we're a very young group with lot of room for physical growth."

Ungerer is a veteran of 22 college seasons. His career includes stops at California (2002), Lehigh (2000-2001), Maryland (1992-98), Holy Cross (1988-91) Davidson (1986-87), Northeastern (1985), Rutgers (1983-84).

Ungerer's recruiting territory includes Florida's West Coast, south of the Panhandle, North Georgia and Central Alabama.

He is a 1980 graduate of Southern Connecticut State, where he lettered four years at running back. Ungerer was born August 21, 1956, at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Ungerer and his wife, Sylvia, have three sons, Dominic, David and Dante.

Bob Connelly coaches Alabama's offensive line, and has put in work at Washington State (2001-2002), San Jose State (2000), Cal State-Northridge (1999), Texas A&M (1998), Cisco Junior College (1996-97), and Texas A&M-Commerce (1995).

"There was some time when Coach Shula had came in and retained me we were looking across the room and didn't know anything about anyone," Connelly said. "Today, it's a whole lot easier. We know a whole lot more about one another and what each other is looking for. Coach Shula has been able to implement what he wants done and his expectations are clear. It's easier to attain the things he wants us to get done."

Connelly said two things the offensive line must address is strength and technique. "I really have encouraged them to get in the weight room and build strength and muscle mass to become a more physical presence on the field.

"To carry over where we left off there's a lot of fundamental and technical work they've got to do on their own."

Following graduation from Newman-Smith High School in Carrolton, Texas, in 1990, Connelly earned a bachelor of science degree in kinesiology and sports studies from Texas A&M-Commerce. He later earned a masters in health, physical education and recreation. He was a three-time all-academic selection and earned all-conference honors as a junior and senior. He was also a two-time academic All-America selection.

Connelly and his wife Racquel have two daughters, Taylor and Paige. ■

Charlie Harbison

Dave Ungerer

Bob Connelly

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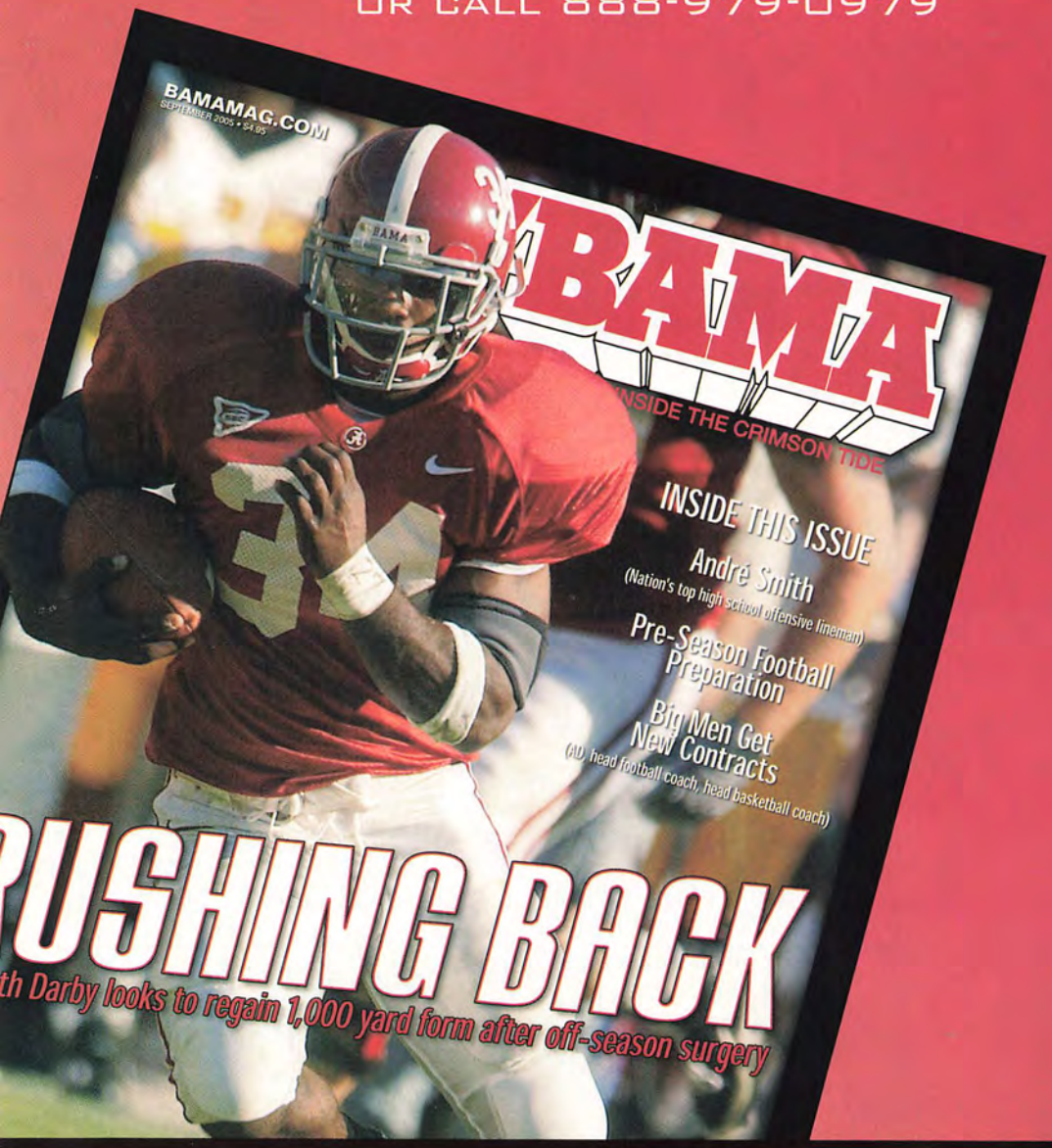
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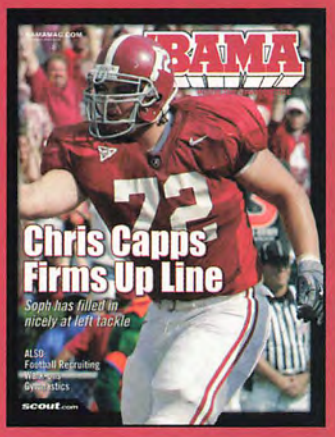

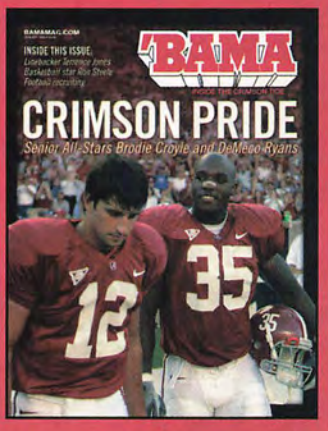

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